

# 2023 Annual Evaluation Report



## ***Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant Program***

***Mercy University's Helping Evidence-Based  
Advocates with Responsive Training (HEART)  
Program***



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Mercy University

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NMG Evaluation



# Mercy University's HEART Program

## Annual Report 2023

This Annual Report provides a comprehensive evaluation account of *Mercy University's Helping Evidence-Based Advocates with Responsive Training (HEART) Program*

implementation of the *Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant* for 2023. The evaluation and reporting has been conducted by independent evaluator, NMG Evaluation, in partnership with the grantee.



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The Mercy University HEART program had a strong start in Year 1 (January 1, 2023, through December 31, 2023). All program staff have been hired and placed in key positions. A program evaluation has been conducted which has yielded key findings from Year 1’s program implementation presented in this annual report. An Annual Performance Report has been completed and submitted to the federal government outlining the progress made toward program objectives and performance measures.

Below is a list of the program’s major accomplishments in its first year:

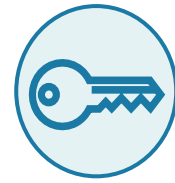
- The program has provided targeted, critical, and relevant training and resources to 41 school counseling graduate students to prepare them for providing school-based mental health services in high-need LEAs.
- The program has placed/matched students in field service opportunities in partner high-need LEA, Mt. Vernon School District, and in many non-partner high-need LEAs.
- The program provided guidance, support, and mentoring to students in field service by trained and certified school-based counselors in high-need LEAs.
- The program identified and trained certified school-based counselors to support, guide, and mentor counseling students during their field experiences.
- A comprehensive data collection plan has been implemented to provide a detailed understanding of student and school needs and a basis for targeting services.
- Significant research has been done to identify the most appropriate evidence-based program (EBP) and curriculum for HEART. It is expected that an EBPs will be identified in year 2.
- The program provided workshops for parents in high-need K-12 communities.

## YEAR 1 KEY FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

### HEART PROGRAM SURVEYS

Surveys were distributed to all program participants, school counseling students, and Site Supervisors. A total of 37 student surveys were completed across Cohorts 1 (N=21) and 2 (N=16). Cohort 1 had a return rate of 96%. Cohort 2 had a return rate of 84%. 100% of Cohort 2 Site Supervisors completed surveys (N=11). Key findings from the analysis of this data is presented on the following pages. These key findings and recommendations have been summarized from the more detailed findings presented in the *Evaluation Findings* section of this report.

# YEAR 1 KEY FINDINGS



01

## Survey Demographics

### KEY FINDINGS:

- School counseling student survey respondents showed some diversity, however, were predominantly White/Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino ethnicities.
- Greater ethnic diversity was seen in Cohort 2 with more Black/African American students compared with Cohort 1.
- All Site Supervisor survey respondents were primarily Black/African American or White/Caucasian in ethnicity.
- Both student and supervisor respondents were predominantly female.

## Program Training and Resources

### KEY FINDINGS:

- School counseling student survey respondents found professional conferences to be valuable and important to professional growth and as a result would attend again.
- Two-thirds of school counseling student survey respondents reported that the MTSS training was valuable to their learning and practice in the field.
- Two-thirds of the students reported being prepared to support, facilitate, and lead culturally sustaining practices in their school environment because of the asynchronous ASCA training.

## Field Experience – Impact & Satisfaction

### KEY FINDINGS:

- More than two-thirds of the student survey respondents reported being *very satisfied* overall with their field experience.
- All Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated that they received supportive mentoring, guidance, and supervision and nearly all felt comfortable seeking that support, mentoring, and guidance.
- Most students reported that as a result of their experience working in a high-needs school, they would indeed seek employment in a similar high-needs school following graduation.
- All field experience students reported feeling supported by the program, having opportunities for growth and learning in the field, and valuable site supervision.
- Many school counseling students reported balancing school, work, and life to be challenging and found Mercy’s school counseling program to be demanding.
- Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated a valuable impact on their growth as school counseling students through direct services during their field experience.

## YEAR 1 KEY FINDINGS (Cont.)



01

### Field Experience – Impact & Satisfaction (Cont.)

#### KEY FINDINGS:

- Nearly two-thirds of graduate students reported satisfaction with the new program matching process and the resulting school assignment (64%).
- Most Site Supervisors surveyed reported having a positive matching experience.
- Two-thirds of Site supervisor respondents were satisfied with the program's communication. Students in Cohorts 1 and 2 were less satisfied with the program's communication (46% and 22% respectively).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Highlights from the recommendations section include a continued focus on increasing diversity and increasing the number of partner LEAs. Additionally, it is recommended that the program build upon the success of the new matching process implemented this year by continuing to fine-tune communication with students and supervisors regarding program expectations. Finally, the program might explore ways in which it might better support students as they struggle to find a balance between work, life, and school.



# Program Description

## About the HEART Program

In January 2023, Mercy University was awarded a Mental Health Service Professional Demonstration Grant to implement their HEART (Helping Evidence-Based Advocates with Responsive Training) program. This five-year U.S. Department of Education-funded program is designed to help place trained school counselors where they are needed most, in Local Educational Agencies (LEAs)/school districts serving high-need students. Through this grant, Mercy University, along with its LEA partners, seeks to provide school counseling graduate students with field experience opportunities via internships and practicums directly supervised by full-time licensed school counselors in high-need LEAs. The program also prepares students for these experiences through professional development, training, and coursework. The program delivers outreach to the community through parent engagement and workshops aligned with the grant's goals. School Counseling graduate students participating in the program are offered a stipend for their time and commitment to serving high-need schools. During year 1, the program included 41 students.

### **PROGRAM COHORTS**

During this first year of the grant, Mercy has included a set of existing students in the HEART program, known as Cohort 1 (N=22). These students were already part of the graduate counseling program when the HEART grant started. While all these students took part in all the grant activities, only those signing service agreements/obligations received a stipend for their participation. Data was collected from Cohort 1 on their program and field experiences and are presented in this report. The program added a second cohort in year 1, Cohort 2 (N=19), which is fully participating in the HEART program. Cohort 2's program experience has included a field experience placement process that involved a very structured student-to-school matching approach which Cohort 1 did not have. All of Cohort 2 is receiving a stipend/tuition reimbursement as part of their program participation. Data has been collected on Cohort 2's experience in the program thus far and is presented in this report. Cohort 2 has not yet started their field experience, and therefore no data on it is presented in this report. Both Cohorts participated in training offered through the HEART program.

### **PROGRAM SITE SUPERVISORS**

Training has been conducted with partnering LEA school counselors (known as Site Supervisors) to prepare them for supervising graduate students in their practicums and internships. Two full-day trainings were provided for Site Supervisors on multicultural supervision. A program Supervisor Liaison met regularly with the Site Supervisors. Surveys were conducted with supervisors supporting Cohort 2 students, as Cohort 1 Site Supervisors were not officially included in the HEART program. Data is provided on their experience in the program, primarily findings on training, communication, and the field experience matching process.



### PROGRAM TRAINING

In its first year, the program provided program-specific training opportunities to 41 school counseling students in Cohorts 1 and 2, and Site Supervisors. These trainings included:

- **ASCA Training 1: Culturally Sustaining School Counseling Specialist (45 Hours Asynchronous)** - Prepares students to understand and implement successful culturally sustaining practices as a school counselor through reflective exercises, collaborative activities, and application to practice in the field.
- **ASCA Training 2: Mental Health Specialist (45 Hours Asynchronous)** - Prepares students as mental health specialists: recognize disorders, how to address student needs, collaborate with key partners such as parents, implement suicide prevention, and identify best practices for student mental health.
- **MTSS Training with Dr. Emily Goodman (In-person)** – Prepares students in Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to deepen their knowledge, skill, and application of best practice to the field through the lens of a school counselor.

University counseling students are also given the opportunity (optional) to attend annual professional conferences, such as the ASCA (American School Counseling Association) and the NYSCA (New York State School Counseling Association) Conferences.

Site Supervisors were also included in training opportunities. The program provided Multicultural Supervision Training for Site Supervisors and they were invited to attend the MTSS training alongside counseling students. This report provides some insight into the impacts of these training opportunities on growth and learning for students and the ability to support, supervise, and mentor students for the supervisors.

In addition, parent workshops were offered in K-12 high-need school communities served by the program. Additional workshops are planned for year 2.

### PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS

In year 1, Mercy University students found (Cohort 1) or were matched (Cohort 2) to high-need LEAs for field experience opportunities. During year 1, the Mt. Vernon School District served as the primary high-need school district partner for the HEART program. Additionally, many students are currently serving in non-HEART-partner high-need LEAs (N=20 school sites). The program is preparing to expand its partnership agreements with other high-need LEAs to be able to place more students in its partner schools and to ensure that graduates of the program have additional job placement opportunities in year 2 and beyond.

# Evaluation Framework & Plan 03

## Evaluation Approach

Mercy University selected **NMG Evaluation** as the project evaluator for this grant. NMG has considerable experience in evaluating grants in the areas of mental health and professional learning at the higher education level. NMG Evaluation applies a **participatory approach** to evaluation with a focus on involving the client and key stakeholders in all phases of the work. NMG partners with clients to design services that specifically meet the project's needs, and the key stakeholder's needs and are aligned to all state and federal requirements.

For this project, NMG worked closely with HEART's project leadership and staff to ensure that the evaluation provided useful information that ultimately served to improve program outcomes for students and families. Mid-year check-ins and frequent meetings were utilized and instrumental in ensuring ongoing partnership and communication toward targeted programmatic improvement. Program objectives and indicators have guided program implementation step by step and likewise, anchor all data collection and reporting processes. NMG has also supported HEART in all state and federal reporting requirements including the Annual Performance Report (APR). This Annual Evaluation Report for HEART provides a record of all substantive evaluation findings from year 1.

## Evaluation Methods: Data Collection & Analysis

NMG's evaluation methods are outlined below, including data collection and analysis efforts across key program objectives and performance indicators. NMG utilizes a mixed methods evaluation approach which includes record review and surveys, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection efforts. (*Focus groups will be included in subsequent years.*) Analysis of these data points was conducted, and key findings have been integrated into this report. Findings are presented in the *Evaluation Findings* section of this report.



**Program Operations and Document Review:** NMG conducted a review of all program operations, activities, training, demographic data, and attendance records as well as conducted frequent meetings and interviews with the program director and staff.



**HEART Program School Counseling Student and Site Supervisor Surveys:**

Surveys were distributed to all Cohort 1 and 2 program participants. Surveys were also administered with all Cohort 2 Site Supervisors. A total of 37 student surveys were completed across Cohorts 1 (N=21) and 2 (N=16). Cohort 1 had a return rate of 96%. Cohort 2 had a return rate of 84%. 100% of Cohort 2 Site Supervisors completed surveys, N=11.

## Evaluation Methods: Data Collection & Analysis (Cont.)

### ***Evaluation activities specific to year one included:***

- Development of an *Evaluation Overview* document to introduce stakeholders to the evaluation component of the grant, its purpose, and guiding principles of participatory evaluation;
- Development of data management document files to share with the client to track participant demographics, program engagement, training, and program implementation;
- Creation of an evaluation plan, aligned to the proposal, to measure program outcomes including surveys (focus groups will be included in subsequent years);
- Support with the completion of APR documents;
- Frequent opportunities to share and discuss project goals, outcomes, and data;
- Opportunities to review and revise key documents and instruments; and
- Written and verbal review of data and reports to build knowledge and understanding for program leadership, key stakeholders, and partners.

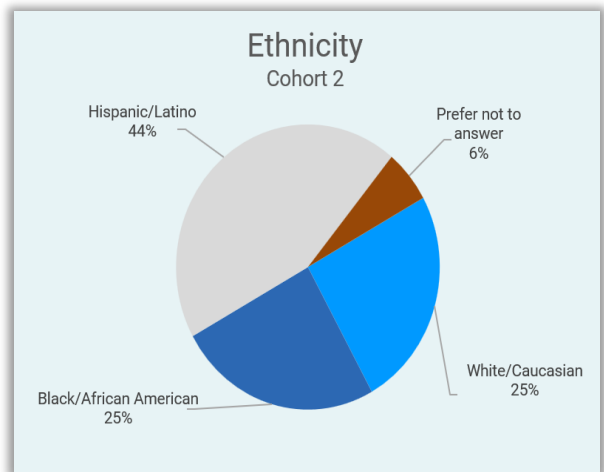
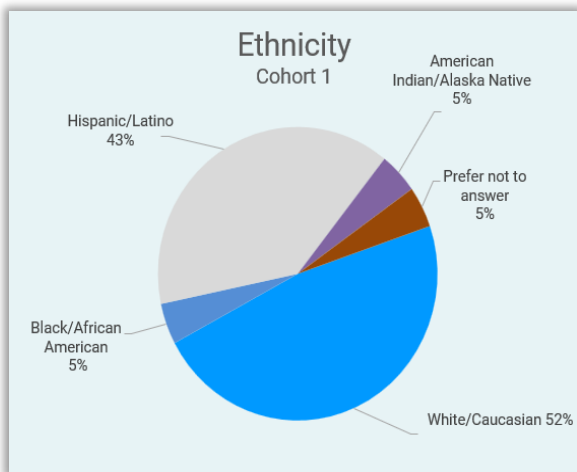
## Survey Demographics

### ETHNICITY



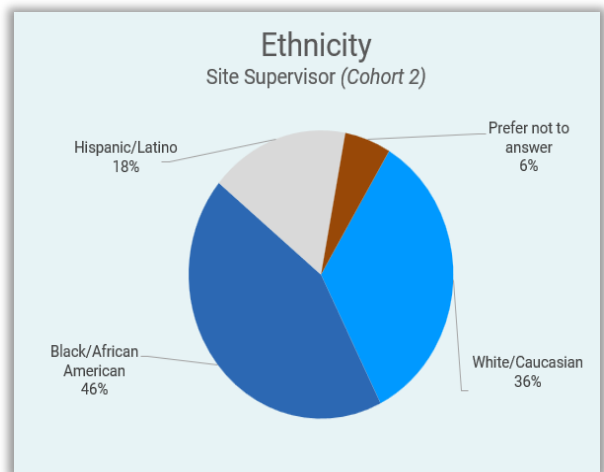
**KEY FINDING:** Program survey respondents across Cohorts 1 and 2 are somewhat ethnically diverse, with most respondents falling into the White/Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino ethnicities. Notably, Cohort 2 is more diverse than Cohort 1 with fewer white students and more Black/African American students.

- Cohort 1: White/Caucasian 52%, Hispanic/Latino 43%
- Cohort 2: Hispanic/Latino 44%, Black/African American and White/Caucasian equally 25%



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 2 Site Supervisors are also somewhat diverse in ethnicity, with most respondents falling into the Black/African American and White/Caucasian and ethnicities.

- Site Supervisors: Black/African American 46% and White Caucasian 36%



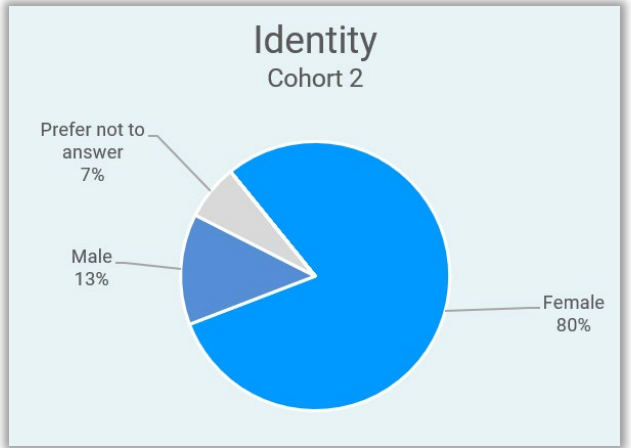
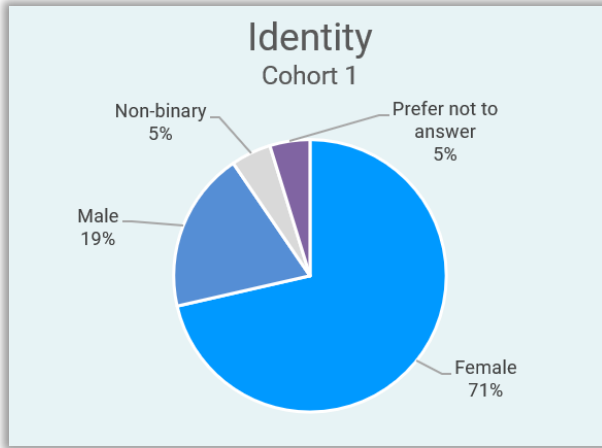


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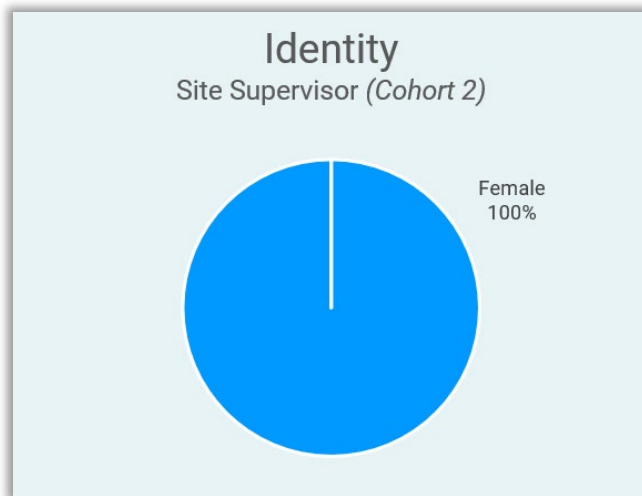


**KEY FINDING:** Program survey respondents across Cohorts 1 and 2 are predominantly female.

- Cohort 1: 71% Female, 19% Male and 5% Non-binary, 5% Prefer not to answer
- Cohort 2: 80% Female, 13% Male, 7% Prefer not to answer



**KEY FINDING:** 100% of Cohort 2 Site supervisors identify as female.

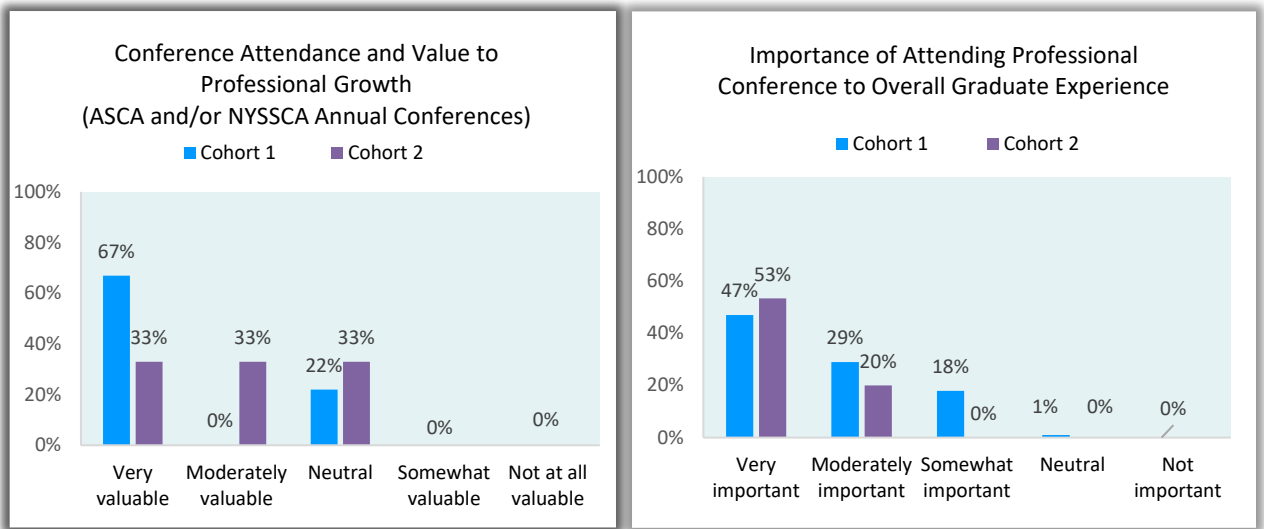


## CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE AND BENEFIT

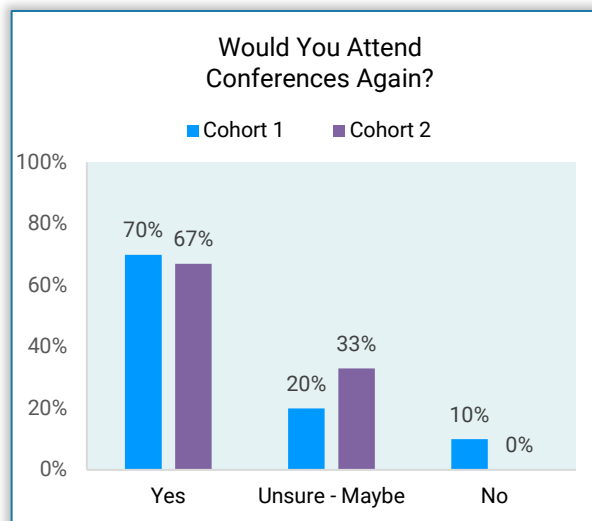
As part of the program, participants are invited to attend the ASCA and/or NYSCA Annual Conferences. Survey respondents provided insight into attendance, perceived impact on professional growth, and the overall importance of engaging in professional conferences as part of their educational experience.



**KEY FINDING:** Program survey respondents across Cohorts 1 and 2 found professional conferences to be valuable and important to professional growth.



**KEY FINDING:** High percentages of survey respondents indicated that as a result of their conference experience, they would attend again in the future.



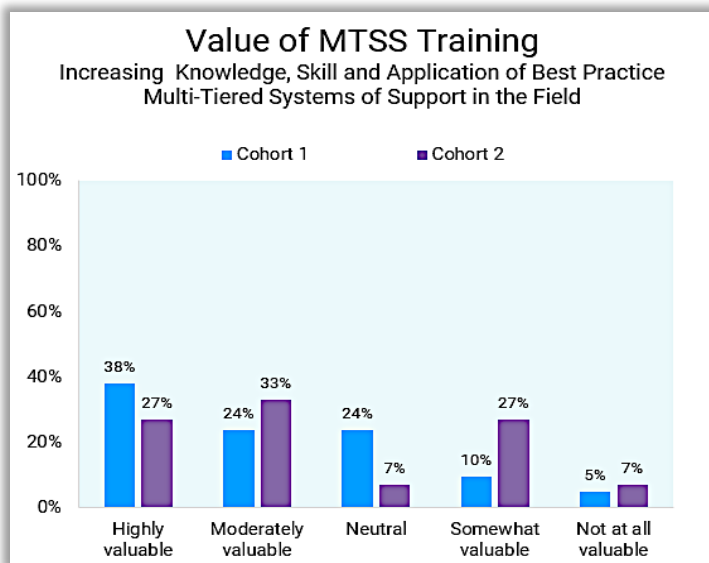
## MTSS TRAINING – PERCEIVED VALUE

As part of the program, participants attended a full-day training in Multi-tiered Systems of Support to increase knowledge, skill, and application of best practices in the field. Participants were surveyed on the value of the training to their practice.



**KEY FINDING:** The majority of program survey respondents across Cohorts 1 and 2 perceived value from the MTSS Training to their practice.

- Cohort 1: 62% moderately – highly valuable to their practice.
- Cohort 2: 60% moderately – highly valuable to their practice.



The majority of survey comments related to the training were positive, indicating that the training offered networking opportunities, a solid foundation, great resources, and excellent opportunities for graduate students to mix with school counselors. Conversely, there were several constructive criticisms for improvement which included: more depth and real-world examples, too general, an overwhelming amount of information, and not enough actual implementation examples.

“The majority was tailored to existing counselors and the activities were to reflect on exhausting practices, so it left the grad student idle. I would have benefited from strategic methods to advocate & implement MTSS.”

- Survey Respondent

“It would have been nice if there was a longer portion on what implementing the MTSS practices looked like in a school setting and what they look like for each school level.”

- Survey Respondent

**ASCA TRAINING LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS**

As part of the program, participants participated in a series of online learning modules comprising the ASCA Culturally Sustaining School Counseling Specialist Training. Participants were surveyed on the extent to which the training prepared them to implement culturally sustainable practices as school counselors in the field.

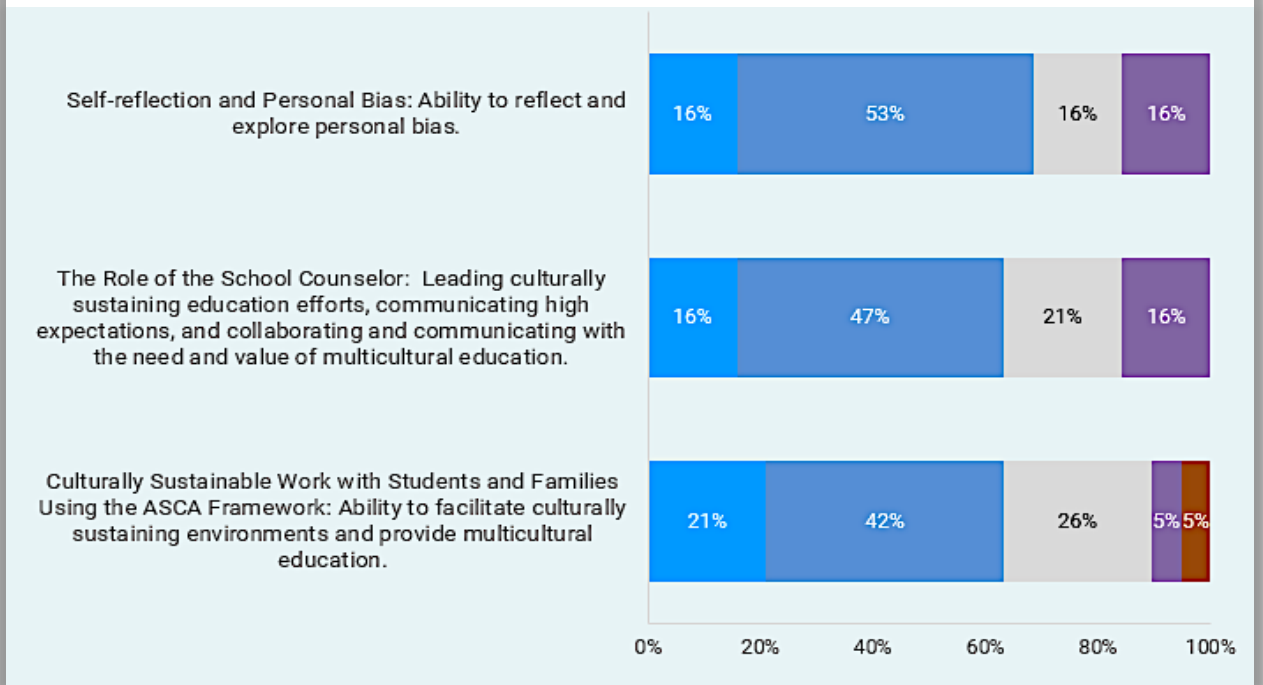


**KEY FINDING:** The majority of Cohort 1 survey respondents reported being well-prepared to implement the ASCA Framework in the role of school counselor.

- 69% moderately - very prepared to reflect and explore personal bias
- 63% moderately - very well prepared to lead culturally sustaining education
- 65% moderately – very prepared to implement the ASCA Framework training

**Level of Preparedness Following ASCA Culturally Sustaining School Counseling Specialist Training (Cohort 1)**

Very prepared   Moderately prepared   Neutral   Somewhat prepared   Not prepared

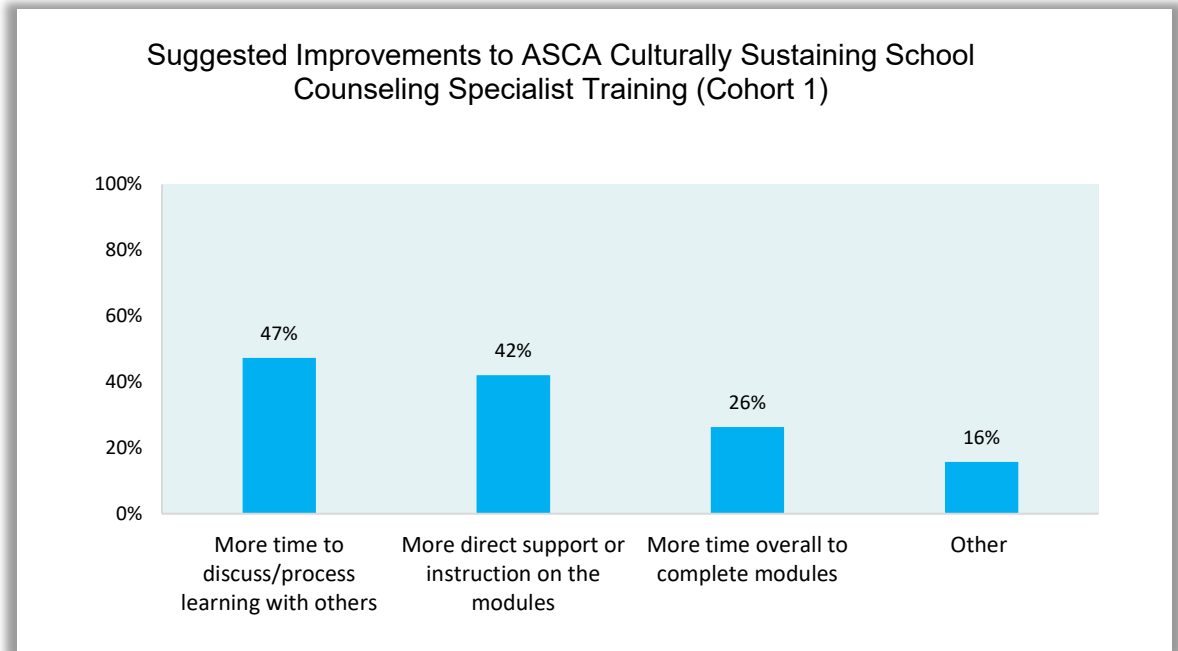




ASCA TRAINING LEVEL OF PREPAREDNESS (Cont.)



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents offered substantive suggestions for ASCA training improvements, including more direct support, opportunities for discussion, and more time and flexibility to complete the training.



Some suggested comments for improvement by respondents included more time to discuss/process learning with others (47%), more direct support or instruction on the modules (42%), and more time overall to complete the modules (26%).

“More hands-on training is needed with greater flexibility and more time to complete the modules.”  
- Survey Respondent

“It would be preferable if the program would permit students to complete the modules outside of the work week – to allow module completion on the weekend when students have more time.”  
- Survey Respondent

## Field Experience

As part of the school counseling program, Mercy students participate in a practicum and internship in the field, referred to as *Field Experience*. Field experience gives students opportunities to practice in high-need schools under the supervision of licensed school counselors (Site Supervisors).

### FEEDBACK ON THE PLACEMENT PROCESS

HEART’s field experience placement process seeks to carefully pair students with schools and supervisors to provide the greatest opportunities for success, referred to as matching. The placement process from Cohort 2 was more structured than Cohort 1’s experience. Cohort 1’s field placement process occurred prior to the HEART project was awarded, and these students were left to arrange their placements primarily on their own. Cohort 2’s process had greater oversight by the HEART project, and more opportunities for prospective schools and site supervisors to meet with students so both supervisors and students could get to know each other.

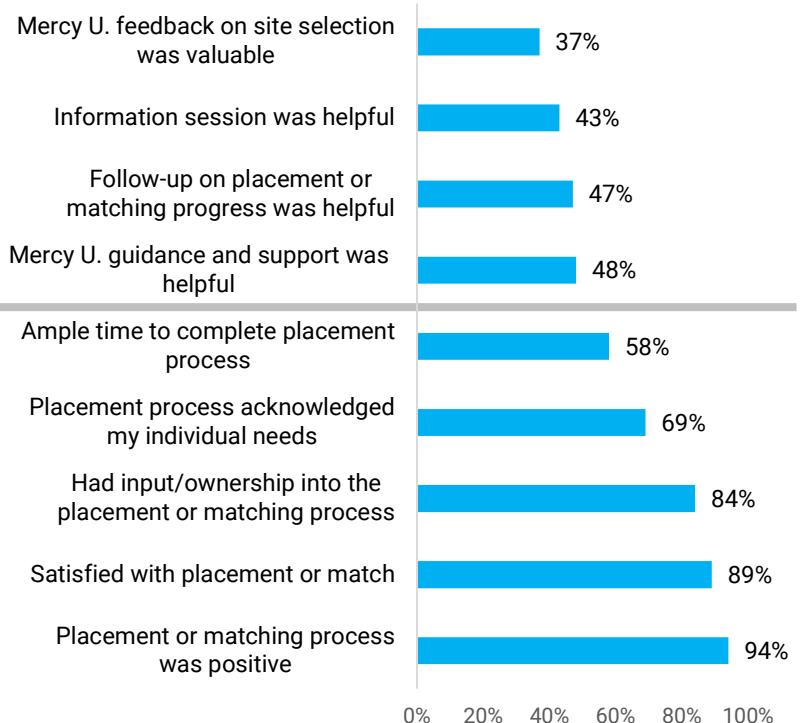


**KEY FINDING:** 94% of Cohort 1 survey respondents reported a positive placement experience and 89% reported being satisfied with their placement. However, fewer respondents viewed Mercy’s feedback, follow-up, and support as effective.



**KEY FINDING:** More than half of Cohort 1 survey respondents viewed the placement process as acknowledging their individual needs, providing input and ownership into the placement process, and providing enough time for the process overall.

Feedback on The Field Experience Process  
Percent Strongly Agree to Agree with Statements  
About Effectiveness  
Cohort 1



#### COOL: Less than half...

- 37% HEART feedback was valuable
- 43% Info session was helpful
- 48% HEART guidance/support was helpful
- 69% HEART follow-up was helpful

#### WARM: More than half...

- 58% Ample time for process
- 69% Process acknowledged my needs
- 84% Had input/ownership in the process
- 89% Satisfied with placement
- 94% Positive placement process

FEEDBACK ON THE PLACEMENT PROCESS (CONT.)



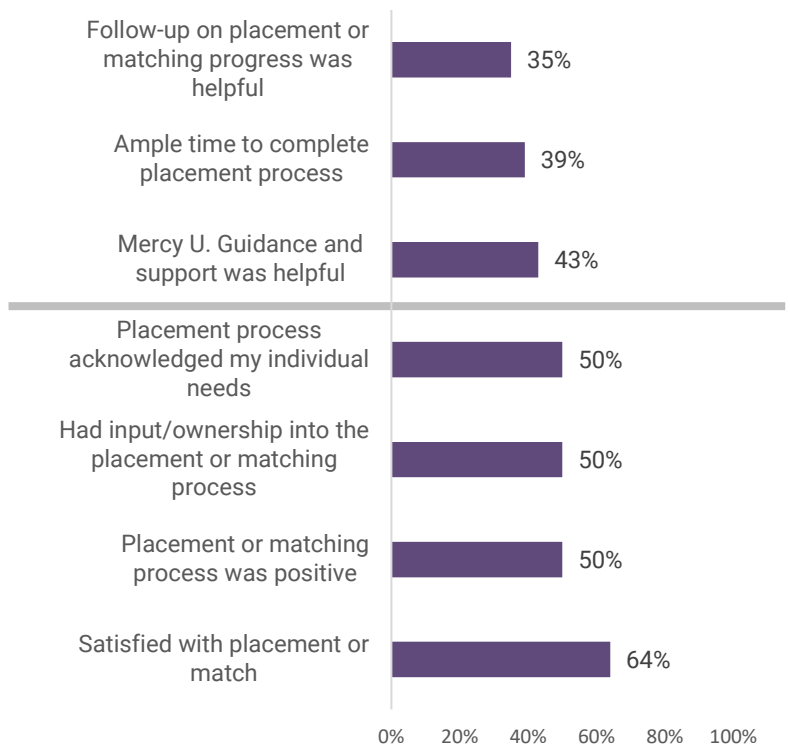
**KEY FINDING:** 64% of Cohort 2 survey respondents were satisfied with their placement. However, similar to Cohort 1, fewer Cohort 2 respondents viewed Mercy’s feedback, follow-up, and support as effective.



**KEY FINDING:** Half of Cohort 2 survey respondents viewed the overall placement process as positive and felt it acknowledged their individual needs and provided input and ownership into the placement process.



Feedback on Field Experience Matching Process  
Percent Strongly Agree to Agree with Statements About Effectiveness  
Cohort 2



**COOL: Less than half...**

- 35% University follow-up was helpful
- 39% Ample time for process
- 43% University guidance/support was helpful

**WARM: More than half...**

- 50% Process acknowledged my needs
- 50% Had input/ownership in the process
- 50% Positive placement process
- 64% Satisfied with placement

## FEEDBACK ON THE PLACEMENT PROCESS (CONT.)



**KEY FINDING:** 91% of Site Supervisor survey respondents supporting Cohort 2 found the placement process to be positive. However, like University students, Site Supervisors also found Mercy’s feedback, follow-up, and support to be less effective.



**KEY FINDING:** Most of the Site Supervisor survey respondents viewed the internship matching overall as positive and appreciated the process of matching, rather than random assignment of interns. They also found the interview process valuable to their decision-making.



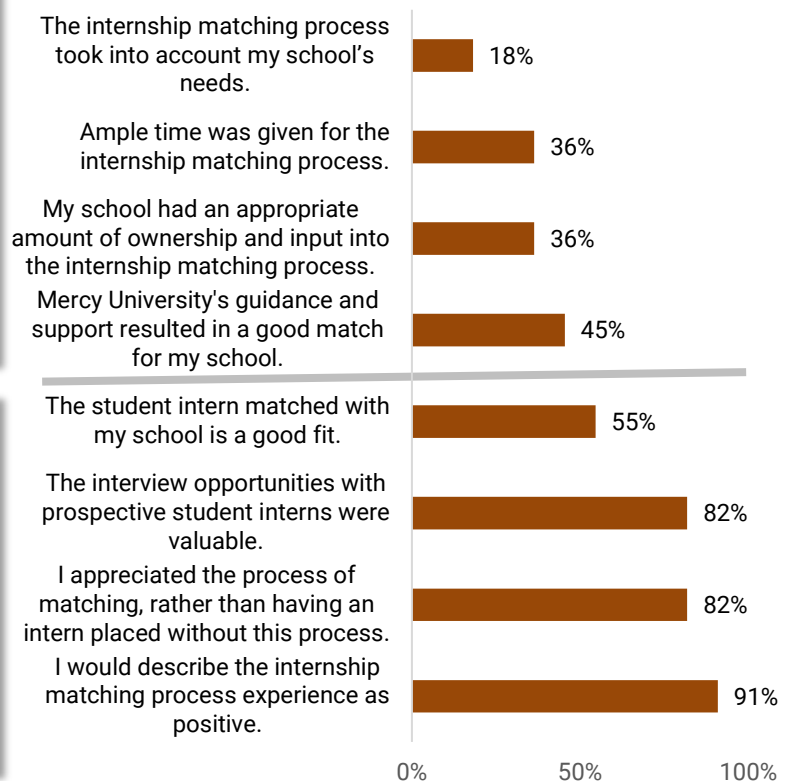
### COOL: Less than half....

- 18% thought the matching process considered their school’s needs
- 36% thought ample time was given to the matching process
- 36% felt their school had the right amount of ownership over the process
- 45% thought Mercy’s guidance/support was resulted in a good match

### WARM: More than half...

- 55% thought their student intern was a good fit
- 82% felt the interviews were valuable
- 82% appreciated the matching process
- 91% described the matching experience positively

Feedback of Field Experience Matching Process  
Percent Strongly Agree to Agree with Statements  
About Effectiveness  
Site Supervisors (for Cohort 2)





## Field Experience (Cont.)

### SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT TO FIELD EXPERIENCE PLACEMENT PROCESS



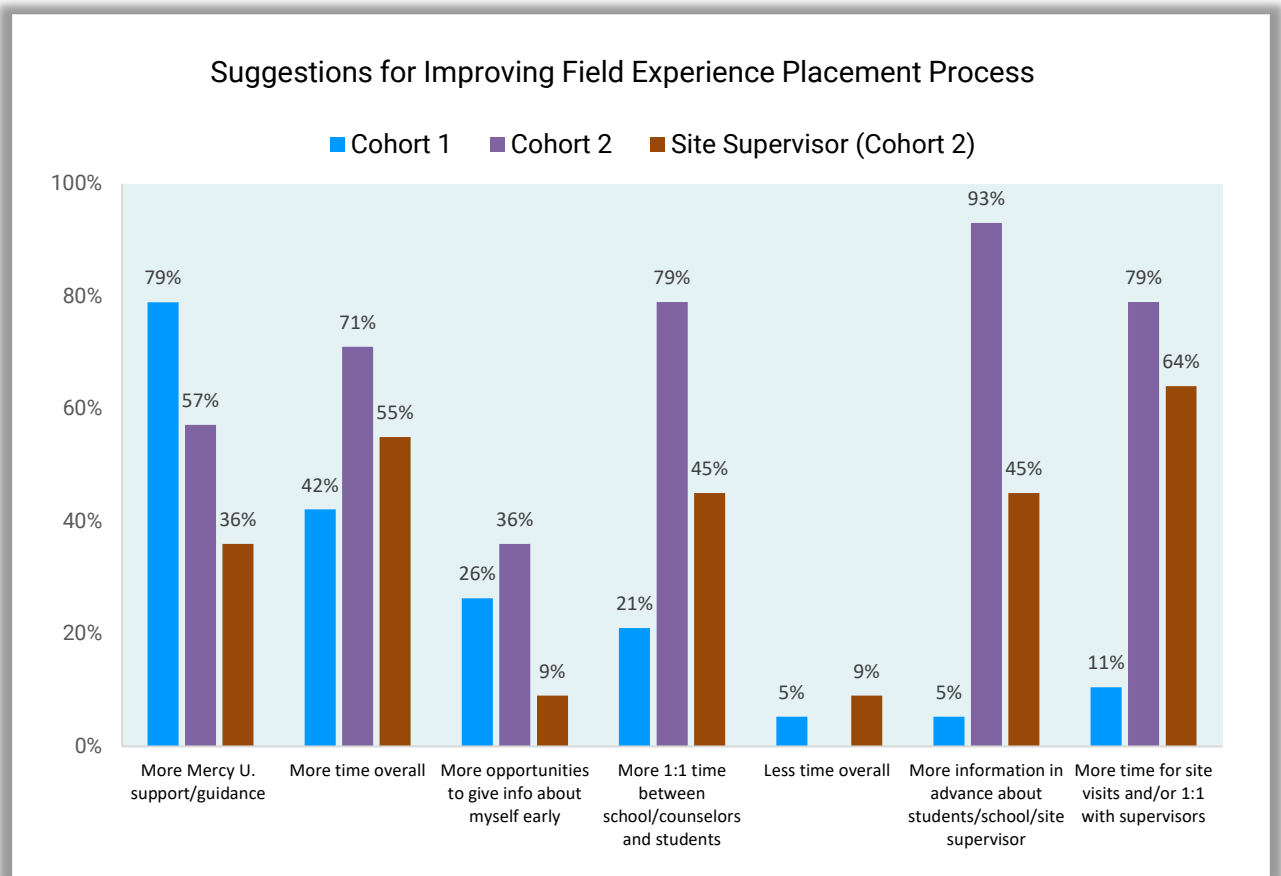
**KEY FINDING:** 79% of Cohort 1 survey respondents suggested more University support and guidance for the field experience placement process.



**KEY FINDING:** 93% of Cohort 2 suggested providing more information in advance about the school, the students, and the site supervisors. Additionally, more than three-quarters of Cohort 2 (79%) suggested more 1:1 time between school counselors and students and many (71%) wanted more time overall.



**KEY FINDING:** 64% of Site Supervisors have more time for site visits and/or 1:1 with supervisors, and 55% suggested more time overall for the process.



“My site supervising counselor was wonderful.”

- Survey Respondent

## FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE – AGREEMENT WITH KEY STATEMENTS

At the time of this annual report, only Cohort 1 students had been active in field experience placement. Cohort 1 provided feedback on key statements related to their experiences in the field in practicums and internships under site supervision with University support.



**KEY FINDING:** 100% of Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated they received supportive mentoring, guidance, and supervision and 95% felt comfortable seeking that support, mentoring, and guidance.



**KEY FINDING:** 100% of Cohort 1 also felt that they were provided opportunities to grow their knowledge and skills during their field experience.

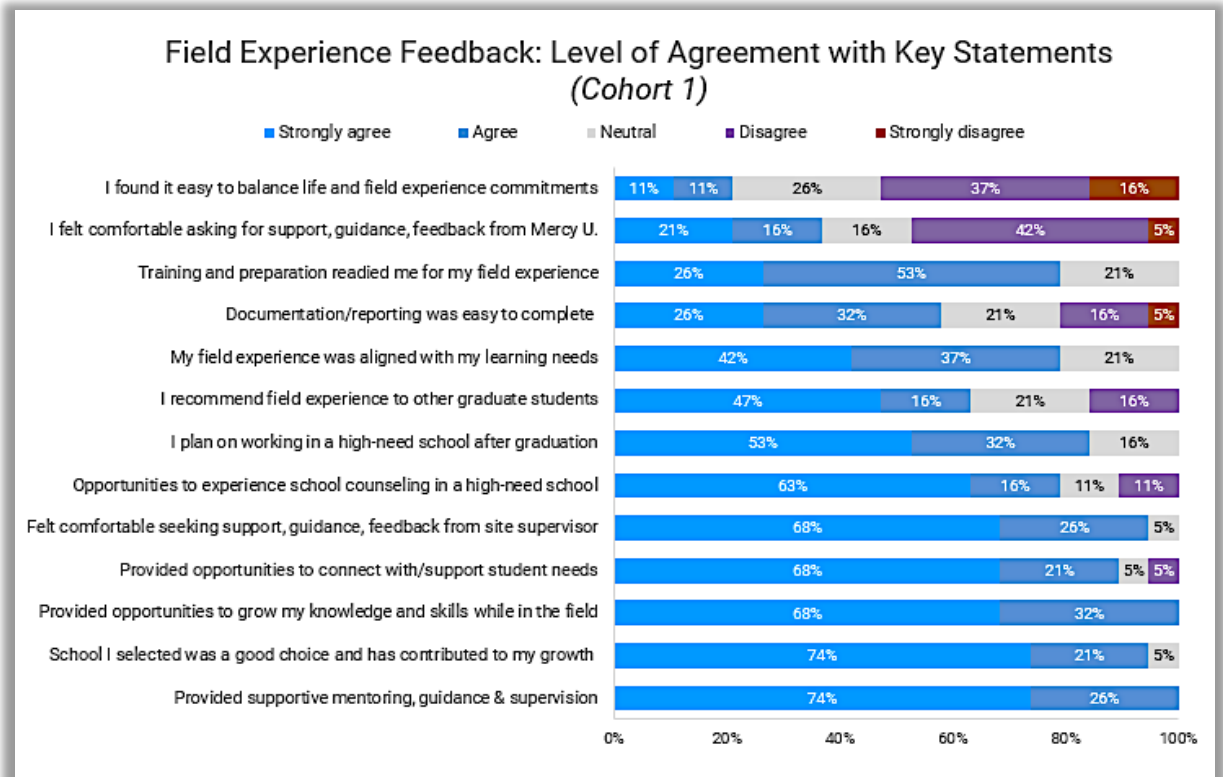


**KEY FINDING:** 95% of Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated that:

- their school match was successful, and;
- their match contributed to their growth as school counseling students.



**KEY FINDING:** 85% of Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated that they planned on working in a high-need school following graduation.



Field Experience (Cont.)

FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE – AGREEMENT WITH KEY STATEMENTS (CONT.)



**KEY FINDING:** Fewer Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated that they found it easy to balance life and school during the field experience. Less than one-quarter (24%) agreed with the statement: “I found it easy to balance life and field experience commitments.” (See chart of the previous page and comments below.)



**KEY FINDING:** About one-third of Cohort 1 survey respondents (37%), indicated that they felt comfortable asking for support, guidance, and feedback from University staff. (See chart on previous page and comments below.)

“It’s very hard to balance, school, home, and work life all while attending an Internship and graduate courses. For example, it was frustrating, in a synchronous class, when some professors chose to do online posts and others held discussions during class, but the online posts were due the next day following a 7-10 pm class when students had to be up early for their internship. For those with family, that expectation is a lot.”

- Survey Respondent



“The communication and handling of processing or getting site approved was frustrating because of different instructions/rules at different times of the semester. Communication was inconsistent.”

- Survey Respondent

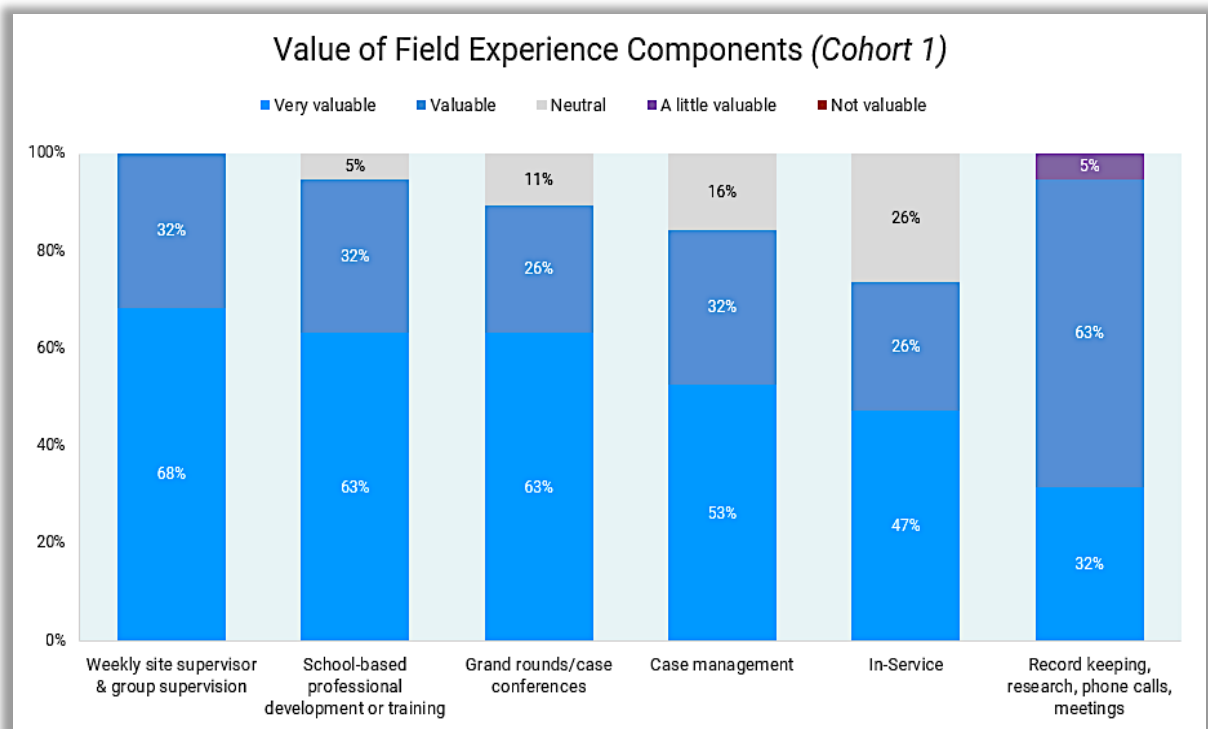
“It is very difficult balancing internship and life because of the number of hours required to be at the internship site. “

- Survey Respondent



## Field Experience (Cont.)

## FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE – VALUE OF FIELD EXPERIENCE COMPONENTS

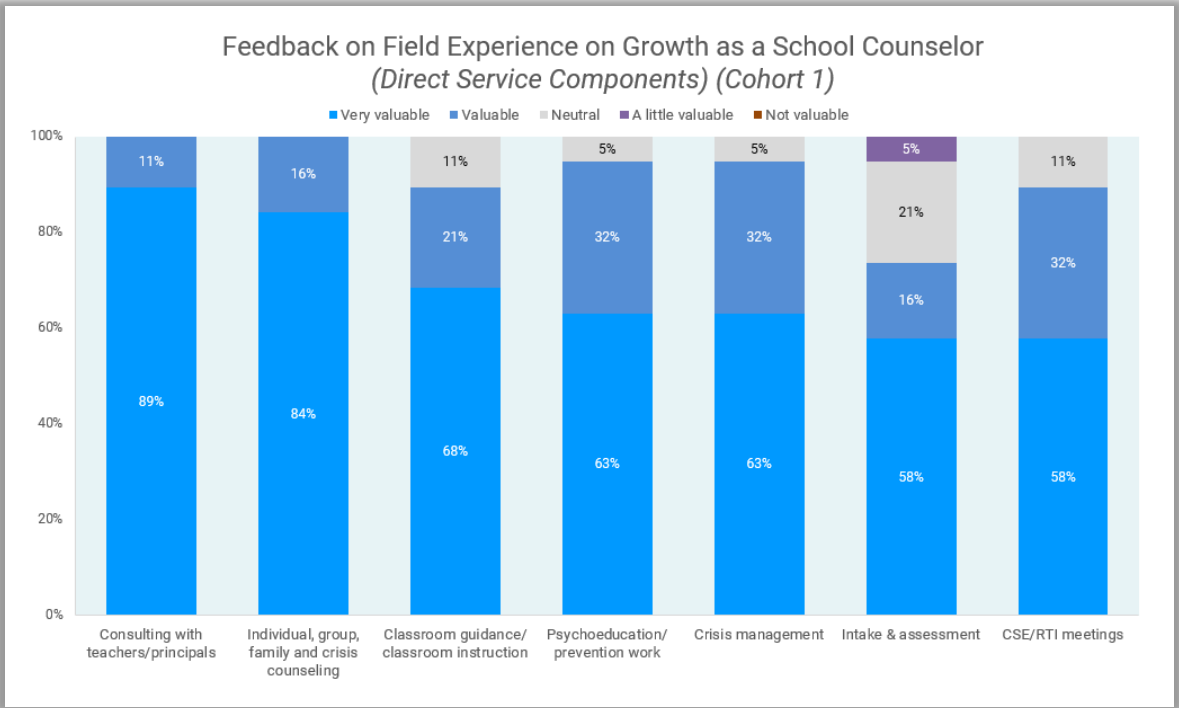


**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents found value in many aspects of field experience services:

- 100% found weekly site supervisor and group supervision meetings valuable;
- 95% found value in school-based professional development or training;
- 95% valued record keeping, research, phone calls and meetings;
- 89% felt grand rounds/case conferences were valuable;
- 84% thought case management was valuable; and
- 74% found value in in-service responsibilities.

FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE –

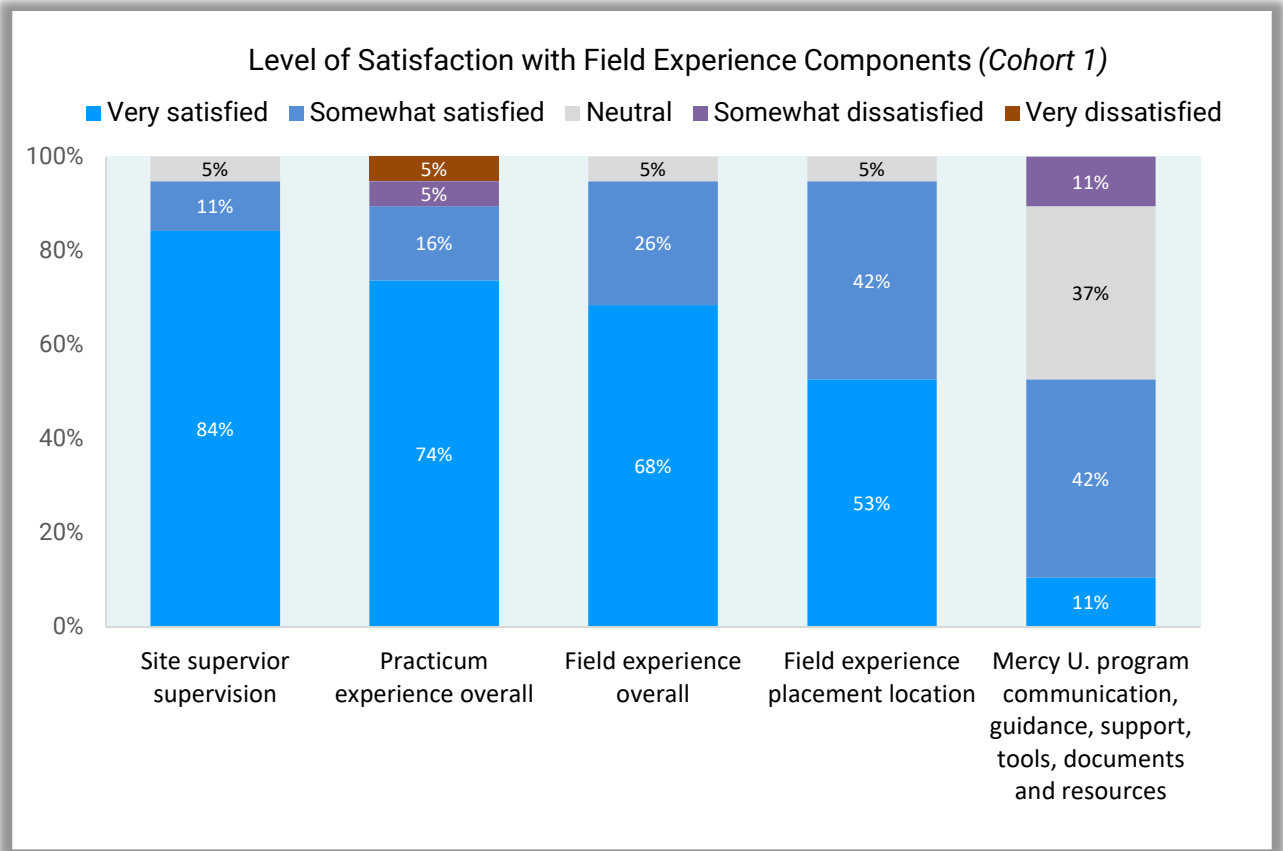
GROWTH AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR THROUGH DIRECT SERVICE



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated a valuable impact on their growth as school counseling students through providing direct services during their field experience. Including the following:

- 100% - individual, group and family and crisis counseling
- 100% - consulting with teachers/principals
- 95% - psychoeducation/prevention work
- 95% - crisis management
- 89% - classroom guidance and instruction
- 89% - crisis management
- 73% - intake and assessment

## FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE – OVERALL SATISFACTION



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated a high level of satisfaction overall with their field experience, except for one area, “*Mercy University program communication, guidance, support, tools, document, and resources.*”

**VERY WARM: 90% AND GREATER...**

- 95% Site Supervisor supervision
- 95% Field experience overall
- 95% Field experience placement
- 90% Practicum experience overall

**COOLER: 53%...**

- Mercy University program communication, guidance, support, tools, documents, and resources



## FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE – CHALLENGES



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents indicated challenges to the field experience across the following areas:

- University communication; and
- Difficulty balancing life and field experience requirements.

“In general, I think the communication from Mercy is good, but sometimes it seems that different people are communicating different things.”

- Survey Respondent

“Lack of communication and guidance from Mercy University is challenging. Lack of email responses or delay with responses is challenging. Lack of clarity in emails sent to all students is also challenging.”

- Survey Respondent

“Too much time spent on trainings.”

- Survey Respondent

“The paperwork process and the inconsistency in communication and regulations is challenging.”

- Survey Respondent

“Balancing the different classes and mandates is challenging. Also, there seem to be unexpected mandates and added work which is challenging.”

- Survey Respondent

“I feel like for the most part the field experience has been the easiest part of my Mercy Education. I feel at times the Mercy emails tend to be confusing and come many emails at once. Other than that, the switch from one of the admins to Professor McKeon has been very pleasant. I feel like my questions are answered and my voice is heard.”

- Survey Respondent

“Learning systemic data on technology was challenging.”

- Survey Respondent

## FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE –

### MOST VALUABLE TO LEARNING AND GROWTH



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents reported the MOST valuable field experience learning and growth elements included:

- valuable and meaningful supervision;
- building community connections;
- implementing the ASCA Model;
- working with students; and,
- hands-on experience.

“Building connections with the students and their parents. It is very difficult to for students to build relationships with school counselors and I’m thankful I had that opportunity.”

- Survey Respondent

“Small group and individual counseling , record keeping and faculty meetings.”

- Survey Respondent

“This was my first time working in a school with a large ENL student population, so I am very grateful I got to learn how best to meet the needs of these students especially since this is a population ever-growing.”

- Survey Respondent

“Spending time with students, group counseling sessions, and risk assessments were the most valuable to my learning and growth.”

- Survey Respondent

“The most valuable one is learning how to navigate and utilize the ASCA model mindsets and behaviors with my students in the field. Working with students in crisis. Engaging with principals, staff, teachers, and, parents. Utilizing MTSS in every way possible for the better of my students and target those needs. “

- Survey Respondent

“Just getting hands-on experience is the most valuable and realistic way to learn what we will be doing in the field. I feel like the field experience and group counseling were the only classes that pertain to what we as school counselors will do in the field. I wish more courses offered hands-on experience. And I wish classes were more geared toward school counseling. For example, trauma and crisis are great if there were a natural disaster but in a school crisis, I would like to feel more equipped with what to do. I ask a lot of questions in my internship so I feel like for some situations I would be ready, but I think more school-specific training in all areas would be beneficial.

- Survey Respondent

“Honestly everything. I have had a great time in field experience and the process.”

- Survey Respondent

## FEEDBACK ON FIELD EXPERIENCE: ADVICE



**KEY FINDING:** Cohort 1 survey respondents recommended HEART program improvements, which included:

- more PD and training;
- more counseling-specific PD and training;
- clearer communication;
- more time and guidance for the placement process; and
- more flexibility and positivity.

“More time to find placement and more guidance on how to find one. School counselors are very busy at the times we have to search for placement, so it is difficult finding one to work with you.”

- Survey Respondent

“More positive support and flexibility when applying for placement sites. There were a lot of deadlines and we were in the midst of classes and completing assignments. It was like another class before the placement even started.”

- Survey Respondent

“Learn to help students juggle their own personal life, school and internship. Not to be so hard on us when all we are trying to do is make a difference be better people for the youth and give back..... all we need is to see that faculty cares.”

- Survey Respondent

“More clarity in emails (who the email pertains to), quicker response times, more attentiveness to direct student needs.”

- Survey Respondent

“Continue to provide professional development opportunities like the MTSS workshop and the ASCA specialist trainings. They are valuable.”

- Survey Respondent



“Conduct more trainings specifically for school counseling students.”

- Survey Respondent

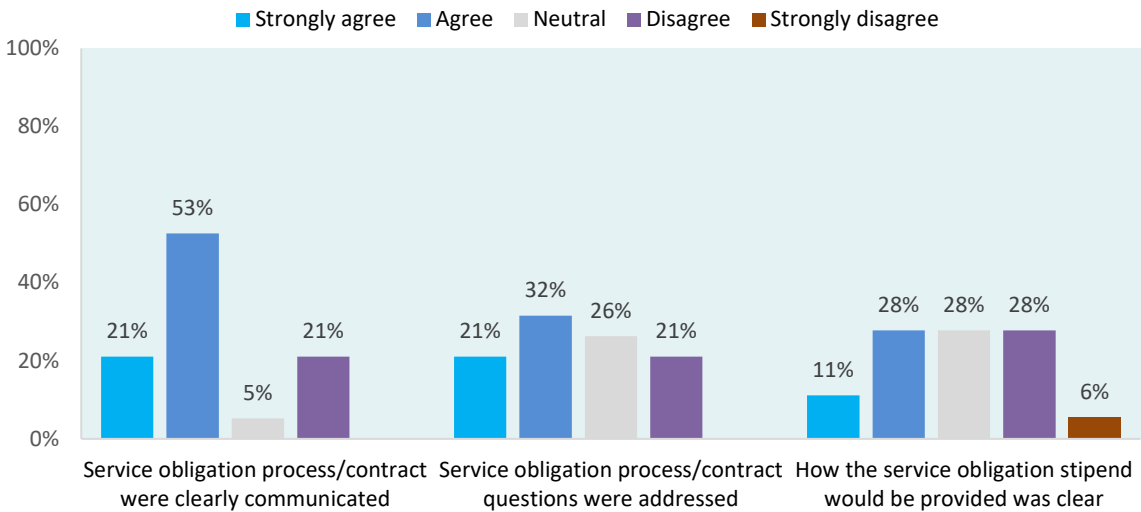
SERVICE OBLIGATION PROCESS AND CONTRACT

HEART students are offered a stipend for participating in the program. Despite the generous stipend, some students did not take advantage of the offer. The survey asked only Cohort 1 for feedback on the stipend offer, since only these students were active in field service during the period covered in this annual report.



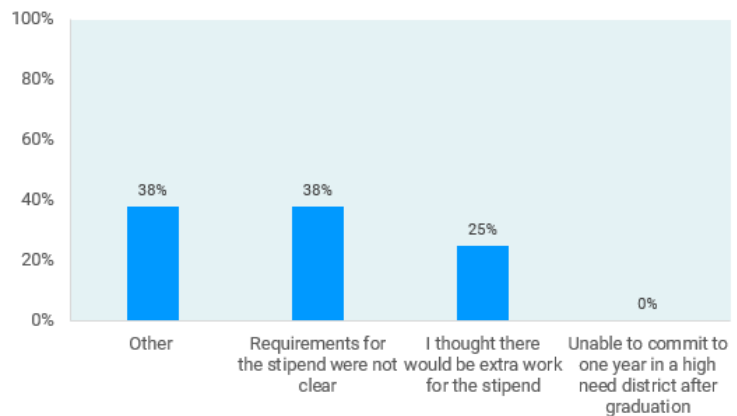
**KEY FINDING:** Many Cohort 1 students (76%) were confused about how the service obligation process and contract worked, finding communications were unclear, questions were not addressed, and details of the stipend provision were not sufficiently explained.

Feedback on Field Experience Service Obligation Process and Contract (Cohort 1)



**KEY FINDING:** 38% of Cohort 1 students indicated that they did not accept the stipend because the requirements were not clear, or they thought there would be extra work. Still others reported missing the deadline, receiving information too late in the semester, or other reasons.

Why did you "opt out" of the stipend? (Cohort 1)





**KEY FINDING:** 63% of Site Supervisor respondents were satisfied with the program’s communication. Cohorts 1 and 2 were less satisfied with the program’s communication (46% and 22% respectively).



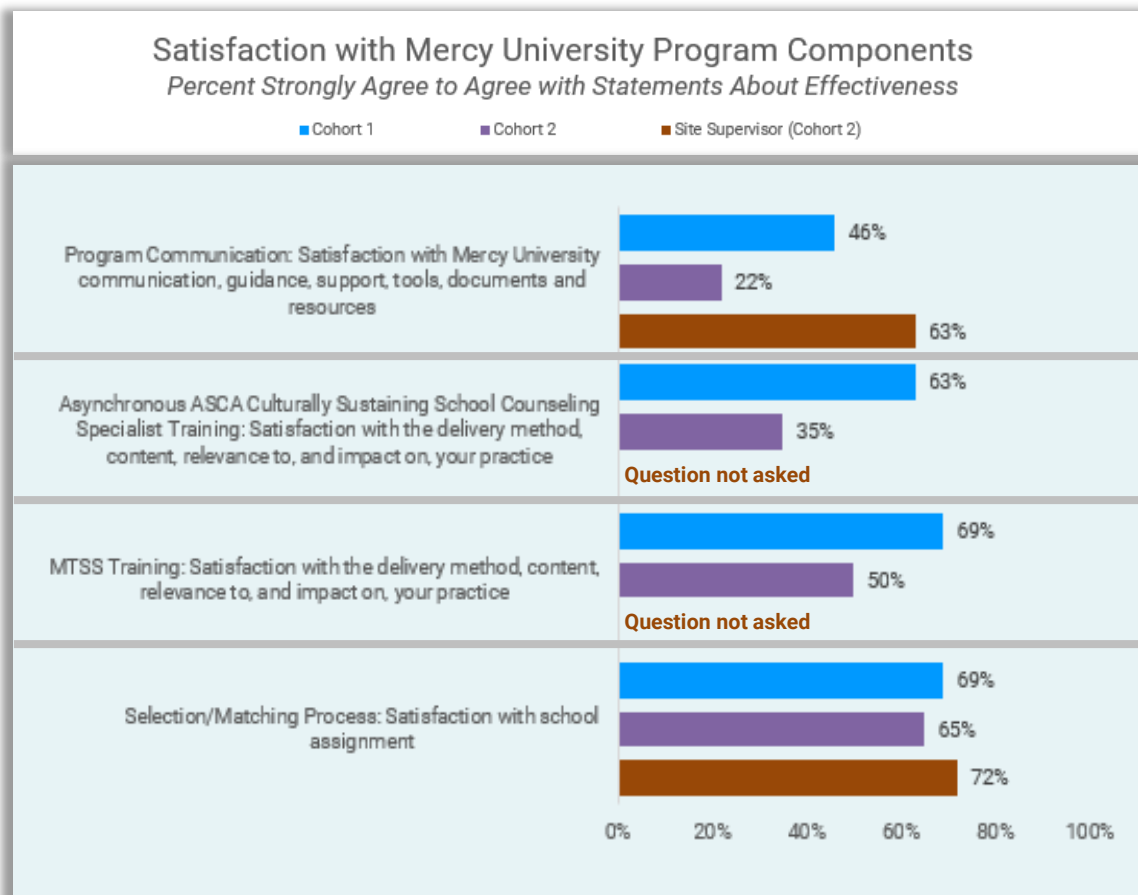
**KEY FINDING:** 63% of Cohort 1 respondents were satisfied with the ASCA training while Cohort 2 was less satisfied (35%).



**KEY FINDING:** Similarly, Cohort 1 respondents were more satisfied with the MTSS training than was Cohort 2, (69% and 50% respectively).



**KEY FINDING:** All survey respondents were satisfied with the selection/matching process that led to student-to-school assignments for field experiences.



One primary goal of this Annual Report is to provide the client and all key stakeholders with a detailed account of the program’s progress toward and success in meeting its objectives and performance measures, as required by the grant. The exhibits below and on the following pages provide a summary of the program’s **Implementation Objectives and Performance Measures** across key program components including GPRA (Government Performance and Results Act) measures and project-specific measures as outlined in the original grant proposal.

The program has made good progress toward meeting its objectives and performance indicators in its first year of operation. Progress toward these objectives and indicators are summarized below.

## OBJECTIVE 1

The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers trained by the grantee under the project to provide school-based mental health services in high-need LEAs.

### GPRA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

**1a.** The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers trained by the grantee under the project to provide school-based mental health services in high-need LEAs (ANNUAL).

**Performance data: 0 Not met**

**1b.** The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers trained by the grantee under the project to provide school-based mental health services in high-need LEAs (CURRENT ENROLLMENT).

**Performance data: 22 (target = 15): Met**

### PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURE

**1c.** For each year of five years, we will train at least 15 participants as school-based mental health services providers.

**Project measure: 0 Not met**

**1a.** From January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023, no students completed the training, and none are ready to graduate. HEART trained all school counseling students, but students are still in internships and have not completed their programs. It is anticipated that 22 students currently serving high-need LEAs in their internships will be eligible to graduate in May 2024, and therefore HEART will meet their target for 1a. by the middle of grant year 2.



## Progress Toward Meeting Objectives & Performance Measures

### OBJECTIVE 1, continued

**1b.** The program exceeded this performance measure, with a total of 22 students trained to provide school-based mental health services in high-need LEAs (as defined by NYSED data.gov website, 2022-23). The program trained 2 students currently in internships in Mt. Vernon schools, with 20 students serving other high-need LEAs in their internships in mental health prevention and intervention for K-12 students as part of their Graduate Program in School Counseling. One of our students dropped out of the graduate program. In our second cohort, all 19 students will be interning in Mt. Vernon schools starting in fall 2024.

**1c.** HEART has not yet met this performance measure, since as of December 31, 2023, no students had completed the training, and none were ready to graduate. Although these individuals had been trained, they were still in internships and had not completed their programs. It is anticipated that 22 students who are currently serving high-need LEAs in their internships will be eligible to graduate in May 2024. Significant progress was made in training all students, who have received 50 hours of training, including ASCA Training for Culturally Sustaining School Counseling Specialist and Mental Health Specialist. MTSS Training was provided in a full-day workshop in December 2023 by Dr. Emily Goodman. Both students and site supervisors attended this training.

## OBJECTIVE 2

The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers placed in a practicum or internship by the grantee in high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services.

### GPRA PERFORMANCE MEASURES

**2a.** The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers placed in a practicum or internship by the grantee in high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services (ANNUAL/CURRENT YEAR).

**Performance data: 22 (target = 15): Met**

**2b.** The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers placed in a practicum or internship by the grantee in high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services (COMPLETED PRACTICUM OR INTERNSHIP).

**Performance data: 0 Not met**

### PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURE

**1c.** In years 2-5, we will place at least 85% of the school counselor graduate students in a practicum or internship in the Mount Vernon School District or another high-need LEA to provide school-based mental health services.

**Project Measure: 22 (target = 15): Met**

**2a.** was met from January 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023. In Year 1, twenty-two (22) students had interned in the partnering high-need LEA of Mt. Vernon School District or other high need school districts. Cohort 2 (19 students) began their practicum in January 2024 and 15 will begin their internships in the partner school district of Mt. Vernon in fall 2024. Another four (4) students have committed to working with other high need LEAs.

**2b.** was not met yet. None of the students completed their practicum/internship requirements. Both are required by the school counseling program, over three semesters. The first group of students impacted by the grant (Cohort 1) will complete their practicum/internship requirements by May 2024. Substantial, significant progress has been made toward this goal, since 22 school counseling students have been placed in high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services.

**2c.** This project performance indicator has already been met, despite this project measure starting in Year 2 of the grant. Two (2) students had (as of December 2023) interned in the partnering high-need LEA of Mt. Vernon School District and an additional 20 students interned in non-partner high-need LEAs. With 22 students in Cohort 1 already interning in high-need LEAs, (100%), this project goal has already been exceeded. All 19 students in the second cohort of Mercy HEART students have been placed with the Mt. Vernon School District or other high-need LEAs and will be starting their practicum in Spring 2024 and internships in Fall 2024.

**OBJECTIVE 3**

The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers hired by high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services.

**PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

**3a.** The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers hired by high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services (ANNUAL/CURRENT YEAR).

**Performance data: 0 Not met**

**3b.** The unduplicated, cumulative number of school-based mental health services providers hired by high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services (RETAINED FROM PREVIOUS REPORT-ING YEAR).

**Performance data: 0 Not met**

**PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURE**

**3c.** By the end of year 5, at least 30% of school counselors trained will be hired by the Mount Vernon School District or other (partnering) high-need LEAs to provide school-based mental health services.

**Project measure: 0 Not met**

**3a, b, c.** The program has not yet met these targets since it did not graduate any students as of December 2023. It is anticipated that most of the 22 students currently serving high-need LEAs in their internships will be eligible to graduate in May 2024 and will be hired by high-need LEAs.

**OBJECTIVE 4**

Increase the diversity of school-based mental health providers.

**PROJECT PERFORMANCE MEASURE**

**4a.** By the end of year 5, at least 75% of participants trained as school counselors will be from diverse backgrounds and able to provide school-based mental health services.

**Performance data:** 11 (target = 15): Making progress

**4a.** While this performance measure was not met, there is some progress towards it. As December 31, 2023, half (50%) of the school-based mental health services providers enrolled in our school counseling program were from diverse backgrounds (see chart below).

**School Counseling Enrollment Data, by Ethnicity**

	2023 Enrollment
Asian	0
African American	7
Latinx	0
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	2
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	2
2 or more	0
Caucasian	11
Total # of students	22

# Recommendations

# 05

The following recommendations are based on the key findings derived from this first Year 1 report as well as collaboration with the program through meetings and document reviews. While the program enjoyed great success in its first year, the data reveals several areas for improvement:

- ✓ Continue to focus on increasing diversity in the school counseling program.
- ✓ Continue to focus on building partnerships with high-need LEAs to expand opportunities for field experience as well as following graduation.
- ✓ Build upon the success of the new field experience matching process by fine-tuning communication with students and site supervisors to ensure a greater understanding of program components and expectations.
- ✓ Provide more explicit guidance around stipends to ensure all students can take full advantage of the compensation and better understand expectations.
- ✓ Explore ways to better support students as they struggle to balance work, life, and school.
- ✓ Explore opportunities for greater participation in annual conferences.
- ✓ Explore ways in which the MTSS training might better meet the needs of participants (i.e., greater application to the field, more targeted toward new school counselors).

# Appendix

## Evaluation Plan





## MERCY University: Mental Health Service Professional Development Grant - Heart Project

### EVALUATION PLAN

TASK	TIMELINE
Review the Program's logic model aligned to the proposal (reviewed and updated annually)	By September 1 Annually
Develop an evaluation plan to outline methods, instruments, data collection, analysis, and reporting aligned to the proposal and logic model. (reviewed and updated annually)	By September 15 Annually
Develop Implementation Documentation Report	By September 15 Annually
Collect Implementation data	Ongoing
Create a graduate student tracking instrument	By Sept. 1 Updated Annually
Collect graduate student record data	Ongoing
Develop surveys for School Counseling Students and Site Supervisors (reviewed and updated annually)	By September 1 Annually
Administer Surveys	By December 15 Annually
Develop and hold focus groups for School Counseling Students (reviewed and updated annually) (Starting in year 2)	May, 2024 Annually
Analyze focus group data. (Starting in year 2)	By June 1st Annually
Review Needs Assessment Data	July/August 2023
Review program statistician's school-based data and analysis.	July/August As needed
Prepare comprehensive annual report: implementation, outcomes, and progress over time.	By the End of March 2024
Communication with the Project Director and all relevant project staff (e.g., Coordinator, Clinical Liaison, Supervisor Liaison, LEA Liaison, and Project Statistician.)	Ongoing
Assist with APR as needed	

\*Note: Longitudinal analysis beginning in year 2, adding each year's data to the prior year to track change annually, including progress toward goals and objectives. Focus Groups starting in year 2.