

COUNSELOR EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOL  
COUNSELORS FOR ADVOCACY

by

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B.S. Ed., Pittsburg State University, 1978  
M.S., Pittsburg State University, 1980

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

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## Abstract

Advocacy is an increasingly integral role for school counselors, and advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill competencies are critical for school counselors to function effectively in the contemporary school setting. This study assessed the perceptions of school counselor educators regarding the degree of importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill competencies (Trusty & Brown, 2005) in master's degree school counseling programs; the extent to which the advocacy competencies are taught in the program; and the relative readiness of program graduates to apply the advocacy competencies. Additionally, this study also investigated whether there were significant differences between the responses of participants associated with CACREP-accredited and those with non-CACREP-accredited school counselor preparation programs.

Stratified proportional sampling was used to identify study participants. A sample of 250 counselor educators teaching in master's degree programs in school counseling was identified and a survey was sent to each participant. One-hundred thirty six surveys were returned (54.4%); this represented 69 CACREP-accredited programs and 67 non-CACREP-accredited programs involving respondents in each region of Association for Counselor Education and Supervision. Mean ratings for respondents indicated that counselor educators perceived inclusion of the 15 advocacy competencies in master's programs in school counseling as moderately to very important, moderately taught in their programs, and their graduates to be moderately ready to apply the advocacy competencies. Using independent samples *t*-tests to compare the mean ratings, the results showed no statistically significant differences between CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited respondents.

It was concluded that the advocacy disposition, knowledge, and skill competencies delineated by Trusty and Brown (2005) are appropriate for inclusion in master's degree programs in school counseling, and that additional focus on advocacy competencies might be needed within programs to ensure that all school counseling graduates learn and are able to apply the competencies. It was also concluded that the perceptions of counselor educators in CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited programs are more similar than different relative to the importance of including the competencies in graduate programs, the extent to which they are taught, and the readiness of graduates to apply the competencies.

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## CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Advocacy has evolved into an integral role for school counselors (Field & Baker, 2004). Initially emerging during the 1700's to improve conditions of the mentally ill, advocacy emerged in schools in the early 1900's to help students develop personal and moral character, and assist in vocational placement (Bemak & Chung, 2005).

Although *counselor* has been used synonymously with *advocate* (Borders, 2002), the counseling process traditionally tended to focus more on assisting the client or student in adapting to the environment than on an attempt to directly impact systemic issues that contribute to various problems or unmet needs (Epstein, 1981; Trusty & Brown, 2005). According to Ezell (2001), systems can become unresponsive, characterized by inertia resulting from individuals or groups highly invested in maintaining the status quo and from the development of powerful rationalizations and beliefs opposing change. Within their multidimensional role, school counselors advocate in support of specific people, ideas, causes, or processes by acting as a catalyst to impact the system (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; Green & Keys, 2001). According to Ezell (2001), "Advocacy consists of those purposive efforts to change specific existing or proposed policies or practices on behalf of or with a specific client or group of clients" (p. 23).

Advocacy by school counselors has become increasingly important across the multiple contexts of school counseling (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Trusty & Brown, 2005). In the context of students, advocacy focuses on protecting, defending, and expanding individual rights (Ezell, 2001), and ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all students (Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). Advocacy is also needed to change systemic policies or practices that exclude or deny opportunities or services, or fail to respect, empower, or permit students input into decisions that affect them (Ezell, 2001). Advocacy can also help to ensure that programs and services for students are appropriate, effective, efficient, adequate, accessible, flexible, and maintained to minimize intrusion in student self-determination, autonomy, and privacy (Ezell, 2001).

In the context of school counseling programs, advocacy has been essential in the evolution of school counseling from a position to a comprehensive program focus (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998, 2002; Isaacs, 2003; Perusse, Goodnough,

Donegan, & Jones, 2004; Sink, 2002; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). Advocacy is often necessary at various points in the program development and enhancement process to structure programs, counselor functions and appropriate work activities, and operational policies and procedures. For example, the school counselor must frequently communicate the factors that hinder or limit the program in meeting student needs and propose cost effective solutions to decision makers. This is especially needed when comparisons are being made of the relative worth of school programs or personnel. School counselors must be assertive and even confrontive in order to accomplish the program goals and department agenda (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). Advocacy becomes essential when the integrity of the program or its staff are challenged or compromised, and when local boards of education, school administration, or staff lack an understanding of the program or its tenets and attempt to make decisions that may impair or threaten the program (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998).

Finally, in the larger context of systemic school reform, an expanded advocacy role is proposed for school counselors that includes being a proactive catalyst for school improvement and change in the school community (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Dahir, 2001; Dollarhide, 2003; Galassi & Akos, 2004; Hayes, Blackman, Paisley, & Hayes, 2000; Paisley, & McMahon, 2001). Professional school counseling organizations have addressed the importance of this expanded role through a national program model (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2003), the Ethical Standards for School Counselors (ASCA, 2004a), the Role of the Professional School Counselor (ASCA, 2004b), and advocacy standards for accredited school counselor preparation programs (Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, 2001). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2002) identified a proactive advocacy role for school counselors including school change efforts and political activity as needed to support the counseling profession, the school counseling program, and equity and fairness for every student and staff member.

To perform the advocacy role, school counselors must be prepared to meet and overcome personal, professional, and systemic barriers. For example, even though school counseling evolved from educational reform, the school counselor has historically been expected to function as a systemic gatekeeper enforcing restraining school policies and practices while being an agent of change implementing social and school reform (Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Herr, 2002). Dollarhide (2003) noted that political leadership and advocacy are not traditional roles for many school

counselors and may result in anxiety and dissonance. School counselors must understand how to challenge the policies or practices they are regularly compelled to enforce and publicly defend (Hart & Jacoby, 1992).

Advocacy is also not without risk. According to Ezell (2001), even when using systemic processes, counselors who either directly or indirectly challenge policies and practices can often be perceived as uncooperative and lacking in teamwork. Significant professional risks involving tension and discord with supervisors and colleagues, poor evaluations, and burnout may result from challenging, confronting, and attempting to facilitate systemic movement (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Fiedler, 2000; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). The advocacy role requires school counselors to be committed to making a difference, to have the courage to take risks, and to demonstrate a readiness to accept and handle resistance and resentment (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Ezell, 2001). Many school counselors have been unwilling or unable to cause meaningful change (Hart & Jacoby 1992), and may even passively or actively resist systemic change efforts led by colleagues (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

Thus, the extent to which school counselors are willing to act as advocates is influenced by many developmental factors including personal beliefs, background, experience, and professional education (Hart & Jacoby, 1992). Having the willingness and confidence to initiate and facilitate change results from the development and use of personal characteristics, organizational skills, a conceptual foundation, and skills in facilitating change (Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Stone & Hanson, 2002). A major reason professionals have failed to advocate is due to a lack of advocacy competency development (Ezell, 1994, 2001; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Toporek, 2000).

Ezell (1994) reported a positive relationship between advocacy competency development and the frequency of advocating for practitioners. Advocacy competencies involve communication, consultation, and political skills needed to influence others (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). More specifically, Ezell (2001) noted that these competencies relate to one's ability to convince and persuade another person to take action in a specific way through the use of critical thinking and logical argument, reframing issues and communicating information to appeal to emotions and values, and proposing and selling solutions.

Professional fields of counseling, social work, law, and special education have each enumerated key requisites for effective advocacy (Brown, 2000; Brown & Trusty, 2005;

Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Haydock & Sonsteng, 1994a; Haydock & Sonsteng, 1994b; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Some of the advocacy requisites are recognized as important skills and characteristics for the practice of counseling. Identified requisites include personal characteristics or qualities involving personal commitment, persistence, tenacity, patience, flexibility, honesty, integrity, fairness, sensitivity and respect for others, compassion, and being ethical. In addition, one needs an understanding of multi-system perspectives, power structures, and group and organizational change strategies. Skills requisites identified include critical thinking and analysis; prioritization; resourcefulness; and written, non-verbal, and verbal communications. Interpersonal communication competencies include assertiveness, confrontation, influence and persuasiveness, collaboration, negotiation and compromise, and conflict resolution. Specifically, the ability to be assertive even in difficult situations is noted as crucial (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000). Trusty and Brown (2005) delineated and organized advocacy competencies for school counselors into the categories of dispositions (advocacy, family support and empowerment, social advocacy, and ethical), knowledge (of resources, parameters, dispute resolution mechanisms, advocacy models, systems change), and skills (communication, collaboration, problem-assessment, problem-solving, organizational, and self-care).

School counselors need sufficient preparation to enter the profession confident in assuming leadership and advocacy roles, and serving as a catalyst for change within the school community (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Dispositions, although least changeable, are a necessary condition that serves as a base for the development of knowledge and skill competencies (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Counselor educators in school counselor preparation programs cannot assume that students entering graduate programs have already developed the necessary dispositional belief system or the subsequent knowledge and skills to advocate, and need to consider the way in which they prepare school counselors to be advocates (Field & Baker, 2004).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Advocacy is critical for school counselors to function effectively in the contemporary school setting. While the development of advocacy dispositions, content knowledge, and skills is necessary for effective advocacy (Ezell, 1994, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005), counselor

education programs may not be structured to prepare school counselors ready to function assertively and proactively as advocates (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dollarhide, 2003; Field & Baker, 2004; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Toporek, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). According to Toporek (2000), the theoretical framework provided by counselor preparation programs focuses on internal attributions and minimizes external barriers and may result in many counselors lacking the perspective to recognize the role of external factors. Akos and Galassi (2004) questioned whether school counseling graduates, as part of their graduate programs, are being taught to consider the school system and culture as a target for interventions. In addition, they questioned the extent to which advocacy and leadership skills needed to facilitate changes in systemic functioning were being taught as part of graduate programs. Trusty and Brown (2005) asserted that advocacy models are not frequently taught in counselor preparation programs. Dollarhide (2003) further indicated that in school counselor preparation programs political leadership skills involving assertiveness, persuasion, and negotiation competencies necessary to act as a change catalyst may be taught only indirectly.

While the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP, 2001) identified advocacy standards for the school counselor preparation programs it accredits, Akos and Galassi (2004) noted that approximately two-thirds of all school counselor preparation programs are not accredited by CACREP. Thus, significant variation may exist between accredited and non-accredited school counselor preparation programs in preparing counselors for advocacy.

### **Purposes of the Study**

One purpose of this study was to assess the perceptions of school counselor educators relative to the importance of advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills described by Fiedler (2000) and Trusty and Brown (2005) for school counselors as they complete the master's degree. Another purpose was to assess the perceptions of school counselor educators with respect to the extent to which advocacy competencies are addressed and taught in the master's degree programs preparing school counselors. A third purpose was to assess the perceptions of school counselor educators relative to the readiness of master's degree program graduates to apply the advocacy competencies. The final purpose of the study was to determine if significant differences of perceptions exist between counselor educators representing CACREP accredited

and non-CACREP accredited school counseling programs relative to the importance of advocacy competencies, the extent to which advocacy competencies are addressed and taught, and graduate readiness to apply the advocacy competencies.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions addressed by this study included:

1. How do counselor educators rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree school counseling programs?
2. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?
3. What are counselor educators' perceptions relative to the extent to which advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of their institutions' master's degree school counseling program?
4. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the extent that advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of master's degree school counseling programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?
5. How do counselor educators perceive the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion to apply advocacy competencies?
6. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion to apply advocacy competencies higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP- accredited programs?

### **Definitions of Terms**

*Advocacy* is a process of identifying unmet needs; making a commitment to change the circumstances of the status quo that contribute to the problem, inequity, or injustice; and taking action in support of the cause or in behalf of those who cannot support themselves. It involves being a risk taker through leadership, collaboration, and systemic change (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Advocacy competencies include the following dispositions, knowledge, and skills (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005):

1. Dispositions:
  - A. Advocacy disposition - awareness and acceptance of the professional advocacy role including autonomous thinking and behavior, altruistic motivation, and willingness to risk for student well-being;
  - B. Family support/empowerment disposition - empathy for and advocacy with parents for their children;
  - C. Social advocacy disposition - advocacy to eliminate social inequities and barriers affecting all people and for the school counseling profession; and
  - D. Ethical disposition - analysis of and reliance on ethical principles, codes, and laws for effective advocacy problem solving.
2. Knowledge:
  - A. Knowledge of resources - knowledge of people, programs, institutions, agencies, and community group resources to mobilize for the advocacy process;
  - B. Knowledge of parameters - knowledge of the contextual boundaries of advocacy to facilitate problem assessment and resolution including school policies and procedures, the legal rights of students and families, and the scope of the professional practice of the school counselor;
  - C. Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms - knowledge of conflict resolution strategies and mediation processes to empower counselors to successfully resolve disagreements and disputes;
  - D. Knowledge of advocacy models - knowledge of multiple models of advocacy to enhance advocacy efforts; and
  - E. Knowledge of systems change - knowledge of school and societal systems and subsystems to facilitate change.
3. Skills:
  - A. Communication skills - listening and empathy skills; and communication skills to educate, influence, and persuade others regarding the problem and potential solutions.
  - B. Collaboration skills - openness to working with others' ideas and perspectives, and diplomacy for building and maintaining relationships;



- C. Problem-assessment skills - defining problems, assessing causes, determining compelling reasons for advocacy, and applying situational judgment;
- D. Problem-solving skills - applying theoretical models or frameworks in decision making, goal setting, and action planning; communicating and collaborating to empower others and coordinating resources for problem resolution;
- E. Organizational skills - organizing and managing the advocacy process (i.e., planning, information gathering, using data, taking action, follow up of action); and
- F. Self-care skills - personal coping skills and supportive relationships to maintain and replenish energy, handle unsuccessful advocacy attempts, and avoid burnout.

*CACREP Programs* are those identified school counselor preparation programs that are accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In this study, it was assumed that each identified participant was the person in the best position to respond to questions describing their program with regard to advocacy competencies. It is not known whether or not this occurred. Another limitation was that, in this study, respondents were asked to share their perceptions by a rating of the instructional content, methods, and outcomes of the graduate program with which they were currently associated. Standards for accreditation create an expectation that students from accredited programs will have opportunities for the development of advocacy. As with any study based on perceptions of participants, bias in responding to the questions may have resulted. A final limitation was that the survey format may have impacted the extent to which the instrument assessed the perceptions of participants on each competency (dispositions, knowledge, and skills) and the extent to which the components of each competency were considered and assessed.

## **CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Advocacy has long been an essential part of the role of helping professionals, yet little research exists regarding how professional education programs prepare school counseling program graduates to accept that role. While the existing body of literature suggests advocacy is an increasingly essential role for school counselors (Adelman & Taylor, 2002; ASCA, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Bemak & Chung, 2005; CACREP, 2001; Field & Baker, 2004; Green & Keys, 2001; NBPTS, 2002), some key aspects of preparation may be lacking or non-existent in counselor education programs (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Borders, 2002; Dollarhide, 2003; Field & Baker, 2005; Sears & Granello, 2002). To provide a framework for this study, the relevant literature was reviewed and the results of this review are presented as follows: the evolution of advocacy in school counseling; current context for advocacy in school counseling; vision for advocacy in school counseling; professional competencies for advocacy; and the professional preparation of school counselors for advocacy in counselor education programs.

### **Advocacy and School Counseling: An Evolutionary Perspective**

Advocacy has impacted the evolution of the structures, content, and processes of the American education system including school counseling (Baker, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Herr, 2002). As a primary socialization agent of American culture, citizenship, and literacy, public education's major purposes have been to educate students in a variety of academic or cognitive skills and knowledge, and in the development of personal and social knowledge and skills necessary to function occupationally, socially, and politically (Fullan, 2001). However, school priorities have tended to focus alternately on the academic purposes, vocational or career purposes, and personal and social purposes, depending upon economic, social, and political forces (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Herr, 2002). Values often collided, and competing visions of the education purposes have been advanced through the advocacy of school reform movements (Herr, 2002).

School counselors have been impacted and interacted within the context of advocacy (Herr, 2002). Herr (2002) noted that school guidance and counseling originated in the late 1800s and early 1900s as a byproduct of the industrial revolution, immigration, urbanization, child labor issues, and the need to match persons with jobs (Herr, 2002). According to Herr (2002), the

advocacy efforts of social reformer Frank Parsons and others resulted in the addition of a vocational guidance and counseling focus for teachers in public schools.

According to Gysbers and Henderson (2001), the added duties of vocational guidance coupled with advocacy to meet student mental health needs in the 1930s resulted in the creation of a separate position of counselor. During the Cold War scientific technology race with the former Soviet Union, advocacy for strengthening science and technology resulted. This, in turn, directly impacted the school counselor role, increasing the number of guidance personnel and focusing them on duties of testing, as well as identifying and encouraging students toward higher education for science and technology. Herr (2001) noted that two Carnegie Foundation studies resulted in advocacy for smaller school counselor caseloads; initially one full-time high school counselor for every 250 to 300 students and 20 years later for a caseload of no more than 100 students. Fitch (1936) expressed concern about the potential expansion of tasks assigned to counselors because they may become a “handy man on whom can be unloaded any sort of task no one else has time to do” (p. 761). According to Wells and Ritter (1979), although there have been student, parent, and professional expectations for the student advocacy role, as school counseling staffs were increased, many counselors were assigned to complete quasi-administrative and student record keeping duties.

Baker (2001) noted that during social change of the 1960s and 1970s, counselors were urged to advocate for student social issues. References to school counselors as social change catalysts and advocates appeared in professional literature across the decades (e.g., Borders, 2002; Wells & Ritter, 1979). The evolution in focus and structure from a position in the schools, to a clinical services model, followed by a set of loosely aligned responsive services delivered reactively, confounded efforts to define appropriate counselor roles and duties. Ancillary support roles and continuous role confusion and conflict eventually became the standard operating procedure for school counselors (Bradley, 1978; Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers, 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001). A broader more proactive developmental emphasis led by school counselors was envisioned (Green & Keys, 2001; Gysbers, 2001; Schmidt & Ciechalski, 2001).

According to Gysbers (2001), advocacy within counselor education sought to create organizational systems focusing proactively on the career, academic, and personal-social developmental needs of students and manage counseling programs and services in schools. Beginning in the 1970s, three increasingly comprehensive program models emerged and were

refined. An initial model began the transition from services-based to outcomes-based approaches with a focus on counselor accountability for guidance outcomes for all students (Johnson & Johnson, 1991). In the 1980s, a model by Myrick (1997) provided a planned, sequential developmental guidance program for all students. The guidance curriculum was integrated with other school programs, led by school counselors, and delivered with the involvement and cooperation of teachers and administrators. The third model (Gysbers & Moore, 1981; Gysbers & Henderson, 2000) emphasized content and competencies within a framework of structural and programmatic components utilizing human, financial, and political resources. It linked guidance with the mission of schools, and provided organizational structures to guide decisions regarding the allocation of school counselor time across the components of guidance curriculum, individual planning, responsive services, and system support. These three program models facilitated school counselor focus on proactive, sequential, developmental activities and experiences to help all students acquire skills in personal, social, academic, and career areas; emphasized school counselors helping all students in their development; and, in the process, sought to limit or eliminate many administrative duties and reactive approaches (Baker, 2001; Borders & Drury, 1992).

Eventually, many school counselors considered the use of one or more structured developmental guidance models to organize comprehensive programs (Baker, 2001; Borders & Drury, 1992). However, the introduction, development, and successful implementation of the conceptual program models at the local level, including change of the school counselor role, were not simple tasks, especially at the secondary level (Baker, 2001; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001). Many school counselors appeared either unwilling or unable to influence school systems away from the status quo (Baker, 2001; Hart & Jacoby, 1992). Sink and MacDonald (1998) noted that during the late 1980s through the late 1990s, state departments of education attempted to facilitate movement by adopting a state program model and advocating for its implementation.

Bemak and Chung (2005) noted that during the 1990s, professional literature on advocacy referred more often to legislative advocacy, seeking licensure in each state for independent counseling practitioners, than on the advocacy role for school counselors. Increasingly, however, it came to be accepted that school counselors themselves needed to be

advocates, and become committed, assertive, and empowered to act on behalf of their role within the school, the school counseling program, and their students (Baker, 2001).

### **Advocacy in School Counseling: Current Context**

In advocating for the profession, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) adopted the National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997), which defined what students should know and be able to do as a result of involvement in school counseling. The standards were endorsed by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) and National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) as well as by American College Testing, the College Board, National Association for College Admissions Counselors, the National Alliance of Business, and the National PTA, (Dahir, 2000, 2001; Perusse et al., 2004). Additionally, to facilitate a consistent comprehensive framework, ASCA developed a national comprehensive program model (ASCA, 2003), *The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs*. The model provided themes consistent with school improvement efforts and the educational agenda of the No Child Left Behind Act (United States Department of Education, 2001), and included a foundation, delivery system, management system, and accountability system. Data-driven decision making was integrated throughout the model within four themes: leadership, advocacy, collaboration, and systemic change. It specifically identified advocacy as an essential role for the school counselor to ensure equity in access and success in educational opportunities for all students (ASCA, 2003). In addition, support for school counselors as advocates is found in position statements and ethical standards (ASCA, 2004b).

According to Adelman and Taylor (2002), advocacy resulting from current educational reform efforts provides a window of opportunity for school counselors to move away from limited perspectives and toward a more comprehensive view of the school context to implement systemic changes. School counselors who have already facilitated movement to implement comprehensive programs have the foundation for advocating for new approaches that support the opportunity and success of all students (Adelman & Taylor, 2002). Without this structural foundation, school counselors will continue to follow the agenda of others (House & Hayes, 2002).

One factor contributing to the status quo for school counselors relates to an amorphous identity due, in part, to the divergent views of the school counselor's role held by school counselors, parents, teachers, and administrators (Burnham & Jackson, 2000). Many school counseling departments are comprised of veteran counselors who received their counselor preparation years ago and may not have either enough exposure or buy-in to developments within the profession (Johnson, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). One example is the inconsistent use of their professional title (e.g., *guidance counselor*, *counselor*, *school counselor*, *professional school counselor*) which tends to further confuse role issues. While most counselors and schools now use *school counselor*, some school counselors continue to refer to themselves as *guidance counselors*, and, in following the traditional connotation of the title, continue to be assigned and complete excessive clerical and administrative tasks leaving little time for proactive preventative approaches advocated by the school counseling profession (Beale, 2003; Sears & Granello, 2002; Sink & MacDonald, 1998).

According to Johnson (2000), another example of divergent views among school counselors includes those who perceive their role as that of an all-purpose helper, and persist in accepting every issue or task that is requested, regardless of the appropriateness of fit within the role defined by the profession. While helpfulness does result in immediate perceptions of strength, dedication, and good will as a team player, it also becomes a long-term liability for school counselors (Wells & Ritter, 1979; Whiston, 2002). For the contemporary school counselor, the results are often assignment to time-consuming tasks and coordination duties that only remotely relate to their professional preparation and professionally determined roles and functions. These assigned responsibilities include coordinating school-wide recordkeeping (grades, report cards, transcripts and other cumulative records), completing mandated reports and paperwork, writing recommendations, coordinating school-wide testing programs (organizing testing materials, administration, and results), class placement and scheduling (creating a viable schedule for each student and manipulating students' class schedules to balance class sections for administrators), and coordinating the process of enrolling new students (Baker, 2001; Burnham & Jackson, 2000; McCormick, 2003). Other long-term effects include reinforced perceptions of teachers, administrators, students, and parents that school counselors have little relevance to the learning process, and school counselor disempowerment to implement programs and practices that would help them manage time, functions, and resources effectively to benefit every student

(Beal, 2003; Fitch, Newby, Ballestero et al., 2001; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Sink & MacDonald, 1998; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001).

Significantly divergent views regarding role definition and assignment of duties also continue to exist between school counselors and school principals, perhaps related to differences in professional preparation, philosophical bases, or paradigm approaches in addressing issues and concerns (Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Perusse et al., 2004; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000). Since school principals often determine the role of the school counselor in the building by assigning direction, duties and tasks, and time priorities, issues of static counselor role and amorphous identity are compounded (Hart & Jacoby, 1992; House & Hayes, 2002; Perusse et al., 2004). While school counselors recognize that administrative support and teamwork are essential (Morrissette, 2000), Bemak and Chung (2005) noted that often administrators appear disinterested, unsupportive, or in some cases outwardly hostile toward the professionally recommended role of the school counselor. Research spanning 30 years found most principals consider the clerical and administrative duties mentioned earlier to be appropriate counselor responsibilities, in direct opposition to the NASSP-endorsed ASCA standards (Perusse et al., 2004). Because local administrators determine whether state and national school counseling initiatives are allowed to be implemented and can either block or facilitate proposed changes (Fullan, 2001; Lopez, 2002; Wells & Ritter, 1979), school administrators can be a challenge for school counselors advocating for a transformed role within the school (Perusse et al., 2004).

Another factor contributing to a static role involves school counselors who are apprehensive and resistant to change (Lopez, 2002). Some school counselors may passively or actively resist or even sabotage the change efforts initiated by their colleagues (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Advocacy requires a willingness to be a risk taker with a strong sense of professional self-confidence and self-efficacy (Fiedler, 2000; Hargraeves & Fullan, 1998). Fiedler (2000) also noted several reasons for the reluctance of school professionals to advocate including the following: a belief that advocacy is not a professional role; a feeling of discomfort with change and risk taking for fear of reprisals from school administrators; a sense of powerlessness in influencing issues; a lack of professional passion or burnout; and being overwhelmed with regular job duties creating a lack of time and energy. Many counselors may feel uncomfortable being outspoken and assertive, or may lack other advocacy skills (Fiedler, 2000; Ezell, 2001).

As school employees and advocates, contemporary school counselors are placed in a dual role dilemma (Fiedler, 2000). While parents and students tend to value the advocacy role, school systems tend to prefer school counselors who are less assertive and outspoken (Hart & Jacoby, 1992). Conservative by nature, schools tend to resist change; as a bureaucracy, the school system exerts pressure for employees to comply and conform (Fiedler, 2000). Additionally, the majority of school counselors are likely very conforming in both thinking and behavior, making them prone to dependence on authority (Fiedler, 2000; Glickman, Gordon, & Gordon-Ross, 1998). In direct contrast, highly reflective and autonomous thinking and behavior are essential characteristics for advocacy (Fiedler, 2000; Glickman et al., 1998; Trusty & Brown, 2005).

Because advocacy often involves disagreement and confrontation, advocates experience varying amounts of tension and discord with colleagues and supervisors. As employees of a school system, school counselors are highly regarded for conformity and penalized in various ways for being critical (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Fiedler, 2000; Glickman, 1990; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Glickman (1990) noted many school administrators value conformity, quietness, and routine and often perceive situations involving public attention, collective action, and assertiveness to be threatening and inappropriate in a school employee. To some school administrators, professional advocacy in challenging rules, procedures, and practices is considered aberrant radical behavior rather than action that fulfills a professional ethical obligation (Fiedler, 2000). As a result, acting as an advocate can be costly for the school counselor, including being labeled a troublemaker, becoming a target for backlash from colleagues at work, harassment from intolerant individuals, facing disciplinary actions for their perceived insubordination, and placing one's job in jeopardy (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Where advocacy is concerned, however, the primary allegiance and commitment ethically rests with meeting the needs of students and their families through policies, procedures, and practices more so than meeting the perceived needs of the school system (Fiedler, 2000).

### **The Vision for Advocacy in School Counseling**

The school counselor's professional identity will continue to evolve. In addition to those within the school counseling profession, outside agencies have advocated for a new vision for school counseling (Education Trust, 2001; McCormick, 2003). These approaches emphasize



school counselor leadership, advocacy, and support for high levels of student achievement as well as refocusing the preparation of school counselors in order to reach the vision (Dahir, 2001; Education Trust, 2001; Perusse & Goodnough, 2005; Perusse et al., 2004). Following years of observing the tasks assigned to school counselors, the College Board created a position to act as a nationwide advocate for school counselors (McCormick, 2003).

School counseling must continue to adapt to its changing context, from maintaining the status quo to cutting-edge social action and advocacy for students (Green & Keys, 2001; Lusky & Hayes, 2001). House and Hayes (2002) concluded that systemic change for student success will not occur without involving school counselors who must now be transformed into proactive leaders and effective collaborators in advocating for the success of all students. Advocacy for the school counselor, the comprehensive program, and the developmental curriculum and services provided for students, parents, and the community will be required (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; McCormick, 2003). Until school counselors are able to successfully advocate for their professional role and program, it will be very difficult to address the needs of all students (House & Hayes, 2002; Isaacs, 2003; Sears & Granello, 2002; Sink, 2002).

Increasingly, school counselors will work in culturally diverse communities requiring modifications to traditional counseling approaches to account for the context of the culture (Borders, 2002; Green & Keys, 2001; Lee, 2001). Demographic projections for the future of American education identify an environment where children representing truly diverse behavioral styles, attitudinal orientations, and value systems will be brought together in schools to prepare them for academic, career, and social success (Lee, 2001). Increasingly complex diversity challenges will require approaches that allow students to achieve identity development in a manner that is respectful of all cultures and individual choices, even when these run counter to the predominant school culture (Borders, 2002). School counselors must work to facilitate a school climate that treats students holistically and apprises all students of the opportunities available to them. In creating culturally responsive schools, school counselors will need to facilitate systemic changes related to equal access, equity, and educational justice (Lee, 2001). As culturally responsive facilitators of individual student development, school counselors need to perform at least five essential functions including the following: (a) promoting development of a positive self-identity; (b) facilitating the development of positive interpersonal relationships

among students from diverse cultural backgrounds; (c) promoting a positive attitude toward achievement among all students; (d) facilitating the development of academic skills and competencies; and (e) facilitating career exploration and choice (Lee, 2001). Additionally, Lee (2001) noted advocacy offers the best response for resolving systemic issues and problems. Advocacy needs to focus on eliminating institutional biases and cultural insensitivities, initiating and providing professional development opportunities for all school personnel, facilitating teacher and administrator awareness of systemic factors that may restrict or inhibit student progress, developing culturally responsive approaches, and bridging the gap between school and culturally diverse home and community lives.

Further, the school counselor role will extend to action as a catalyst for change throughout the school and community (Borders, 2002; Bradley, 1978; Lapan, 2001; Myers, Sweeney, & White, 2002; Stone & Hanson, 2002). According to Hayes et al. (2000), school counselors will be responsible for using knowledge of systems theory to develop understanding of school dynamics and use skills in systemic intervention and group dynamics to facilitate appropriate changes within schools. School counselors will become leaders of educational reform initiatives to improve teaching and learning and serve as advocates for equal opportunity and access to a quality education for all students (Stone & Hanson, 2002). School counselors will also play an important role within the interpersonal climate of the school by actively shaping structural components of the school context that nurture the development of learners (Lapan, Kardash, & Turner, 2002). Across critical components of the school context, school counselors will work to develop resiliency-promoting characteristics (caring and support, setting high expectations, providing opportunities for meaningful participation) and remove factors that create student vulnerability and risk.

According to Green and Keys (2001), school counselors will also need to apply principles of psychology and systemic-ecology to recognize and respond to the environment of the individual. Typically, school counselors have spent their time focused at the individual or micro-system level; however, implementing this broader contextual framework will require the ability to assess how various levels of systems and subsystems impact the individual's development (Green & Keys, 2001). School counselors can assess systemic needs and intervene through advocacy by identifying unmet needs as well as incongruities between system goals and delivery, sharing insight of alternate solutions, and linking resources to data and the process of change.

In order to transform their role, school counselors will need clear explanations, assertiveness, and advocacy to change vague or inappropriate job descriptions and evaluation processes (House & Hayes, 2002; Johnson, 2000; Sears & Granello, 2002; Whiston, 2002). Persuasion skills and advocacy for programs and students will be required to convince school administrators and teachers that counselors are prepared to make a difference in the school. School counselors must continue to be proactive in shaping their future by re-framing the counselor's role as advocate, catalyst, broker, leader, and facilitator of systemic reform. To include these roles, school counselors must adjust the focus from direct to more indirect services, such as consultation, collaboration, advocacy, and program coordination (Green & Keys, 2001; Sears & Granello, 2002). Systemic interventions facilitating changes in goals, organizational structure, or operating procedures function as an indirect service to the student (Green & Keys, 2001; Sears & Granello, 2002). School counseling will depend upon the ability to identify how counselor roles, duties, functions, and interventions can be transformed to be of greater benefit and impact all students (Lapan, 2001).

In order to function effectively in this transformed role, school counselors will need to be comfortable in leadership roles, be assertive, and be willing to take risks as an advocate (Hayes et al., 2000). In addition, they will periodically need to use available appeals processes to take an issue or cause to higher administrative levels until an acceptable conclusion results (Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Sears & Granello, 2002). School counselors will work as change agents and advocates for the elimination of systemic barriers that impede academic success for all students (Beale, 2003; Kuranz, 2002; Lapan, 2001; Martin, 1998; Walz & Benjamin, 1978). To impact all students, school counselors will need to take the initiative to influence the rules of the school environment, create a cooperative working team, and gain consensus (Kuranz, 2002). School counselors will need skill in individual interventions to engage, understand, and support the student or family in negotiating with the various systems influencing the situation. They must also have a thorough knowledge of the school as a dynamic social organization and be able to access accurate and relevant data on school needs to lead advocacy efforts. In advocating for and effecting change, school counselors must collaborate with others (Galassi & Akos, 2004).

## **Professional Competencies for Advocacy**

Advocacy is similar within a number of disciplines, including counseling, psychology, social work, sociology, law, religion, pediatrics, nursing and health care, and education, as well as the public policy, social action, and social justice arenas (Baldwin, 2003; Barrett, Johnson, & Meyer, 1985; Brawley, 1997; Delk, 2002; Eriksen, 1997, 1999; Mc Mahon, 1993; Oberg, 2003; Reisch, 1990; Rudolf, 2003; Wright, 1992; Wright & Wright, 2000). As a process, advocacy is deliberate behavior used by people and groups to influence others in making changes (CARE International, 2001). Various characterizations and descriptions of the role of an advocate and the process of advocacy have been offered (Anderson, Chitwood, & Hayden, 1997; CACREP, 2001; Delcourt, 2003; Epstein, 1981; Ezell, 2001; Galassi & Akos, 2004; Kurpius & Rozecki, 1992; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Based on the belief that individual or collective action must be taken to right injustices or to improve conditions for the benefit of an individual or groups of individuals, advocacy involves promoting ideas, beliefs, or programs that for some reason need additional support in order to bring about desired change (Kurpius & Rozecki, 1992). Advocacy challenges institutional and social barriers that impede academic, career, or personal-social development; questions the status quo; challenges rules and regulations that deny access; and protests change that limits or decreases opportunities (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Acceptance of the advocacy role, speaking up for rights, and defending one's beliefs is often difficult (Osborne, Collison, House, Gray, Firth, & Lou, 1998). Advocacy is inherently a political process involving risks for a professional's relationships with colleagues or the community, and one's professional career (McLoughlin, 1985). Toporek (2000) asserted counseling is also political, whether serving to maintain the status quo or in advocating a change in the status quo through empowerment to social action. Advocacy in counseling is based on the belief that environmental change must occur and that a professional may influence the change process in a way unavailable to students (Toporek, 2000). Key requisites for effective advocacy have been enumerated, and involve personal belief systems and characteristics, specific knowledge, and skills (Brown, 2000; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Haydock & Sonsteng, 1994; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005).

Required attitudes and beliefs for effective advocacy include a seriousness of purpose and passion, courage to take risks, perseverance, persistence, tenacity and patience to maintain vision

and energy over a long period of time, and a true commitment to making a difference regardless of the obstacles (Delcourt, 2003; Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Goldberg 2003; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Advocates must also be honest, fair, and ethical, and have integrity (Delcourt, 2003; Goldberg 2003; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). They must also have developed a social conscience and follow it, have empathy, respect, sensitivity, and compassion for others, and be committed to improving the circumstances of others (Delcourt 2003; Goldberg, 2003; Haydock & Sonsteng, 1994; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). As an advocate, school counselors must have a solid foundation of professional pride and professional credibility based on the ability to articulate the program agenda and perceptions of having power within the school environment (Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; McCormick, 2003; Myers et al., 2002).

Advocacy requires critical thinking, analysis, and problem solving skills that can be transformed into written and oral communications (Brown, 2000; Kahn, 1980; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Assessment, research, and technical skills are needed to evaluate initiatives, develop logical and persuasive arguments on an issue, and reach out to a broad spectrum of people through various media, technology, and the Internet (Allen, 1992; Ezell, 2001; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Myers et al., 2002; Stone, 2004; Stone & Hanson, 2002). Additional advocacy requisite skills include planning, preparation, resourcefulness, and flexibility to accomplish the task at hand and take advantage of unplanned opportunities (Delcourt, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Goldberg, 2003).

Additional requisite skills for advocacy include verbal and non-verbal interpersonal communication skills, demonstration of warmth, listening, understanding and responding empathetically to others (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Being able to communicate effectively with those having authority, power, and resources in order to improve circumstances is essential for advocacy. Skills include assertiveness, confrontation, influence, and persuasiveness; understanding and using negotiation and compromise to provide political leadership; conflict resolution; and collaboration processes (Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Haydock & Sonsteg, 1994; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Assertiveness and influencing skills are seen as crucial (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000). Elaborating, Fiedler (2000) noted skills for influencing others involve providing relevant information, focusing attention on issues, and convincing and persuading others to accept alternative ideas, processes, and

procedures. Advocates must be able to convince systems, influence policy, and persuade decision makers to make changes or maintain options (Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). They must know professional limitations, and follow legal mandates and ethical considerations (Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001).

In addition, effective advocates must have an understanding of the dynamics and power structures of multiple systems and be able to consider the interactions of each system in various situations (Dollarhide, 2003; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Krueger, 2002). According to Fullan (2001), systemic educational change requires an advocate who can balance commitment to change with an understanding that change is a process involving numerous facets, creating a multidimensional impact not only within the same group, but also within the same individual. Further, Fullan (2001) noted that significant change impacts each individual's basic core conceptions and beliefs, sense of competence, self-concept, identity, and prior learning, creating self-doubt. Disagreement and conflict are not only inevitable, they are fundamental to successful group change (Fullan, 2001; Ward, 1979). Effective change involves allowing each person time and opportunity to work through personal meaning of the change, to react, to form an opinion, to interact with others who are affected, and to obtain support and assistance for making the change.

Advocates must understand group and organizational change processes, and have the skills to facilitate individual, group, and organizational change (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). School counselors advocating for and facilitating systemic change must therefore, seek to understand the existing realities of those affected by understanding policies, procedures, and work group behavior that function within the context of that group and utilize timing, awareness of the stages of change, and group dynamic factors and processes to lead others through the process (Dollarhide, 2003; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Northern & Bailey, 1991; Ward, 1979). For successful individual and group change, Ward (1979) noted that leaders must provide four essential functions within the dynamics of the group to facilitate positive change:

1. Caring (support, praise, protection, acceptance, and concern)
2. Meaning attribution (explaining, clarifying, interpreting, providing a cognitive framework/vision for change, and translating experiences into ideas).
3. Emotional stimulation (challenging, confronting, and personal risk taking)

4. Executive functions (setting limits, rules, norms and goals, managing time and other behaviors that relate to procedures)

Trusty and Brown (2005), citing Fiedler (2000), delineated and organized advocacy competencies for school counselors into the categories of dispositions (advocacy, family support and empowerment, social advocacy, and ethical), knowledge (of resources, parameters, dispute resolution mechanisms, advocacy models, systems change), and skills (communication, collaboration, problem-assessment, problem-solving, organizational, and self-care). They noted that dispositional competencies require agreement with and acceptance of the professional role of advocacy; an autonomous thought process and behavior; a caring and altruistic motivation focused on student well-being; and a willingness to take risks on behalf of meeting student needs. Advocacy dispositions also include recognition that parents are the first and often best advocates for their children, and readiness to support and empower families in the advocacy process as needed. In addition, advocacy dispositions involve a belief in the necessity of advocacy to eliminate social inequities and barriers affecting all people and groups, as well as for the profession and its impact on students and others. An advocacy disposition also involves valuing and following professional codes of ethics and law when encountering dilemmas. Personal values, attitudes, and beliefs are inherent in advocacy as most advocacy efforts are based on a personal sense of what should exist or must transpire (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Glickman et al., 1998). According to Fiedler (2000), without sufficient disposition toward advocacy, professionals will not be motivated to acquire necessary knowledge and skills.

The advocacy knowledge competencies involve understanding the scope and parameters of professional practice, school policies and procedures, and the rights of individuals and families (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Knowledge competencies also include knowing a wide range of people, programs, institutions, agencies, and community groups that can be used as resources in the advocacy process. Because advocacy processes often involve disagreement and conflict, the knowledge base includes knowledge of problem assessment and resolution processes (e.g., conflict resolution strategies for empowerment and resolution of disagreements). The knowledge base also includes understanding various models of advocacy to provide counselors flexibility in approaching issues, and use of a systems perspective to understand and form partnerships for change among the systems and subsystems within school and society.

The advocacy skill competencies have a foundation of relationship building, listening skills, and empathy skills to understand and assess problems (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Additional communication skills involve assertiveness and persuasion to focus others on recognizing problem situations and acting on potential solutions. Skills-based competencies also involve problem assessment and definition, evaluating probability of problem resolution through advocacy, and selection of priorities for resolution. Communication and collaboration skills are included to build relationships, empower others, and bring resources to bear on resolution of an issue. According to Trusty and Brown (2005), because advocacy efforts often position counselors and administrators on opposite sides of an issue, special attention is needed to maintain positive working relationships with administrators. Additional skill competencies include the use of counseling theories and change models as a framework for decisions, actions, and goals. Organization skills involve detailed planning, gathering and presenting data, organizing action, and follow-up. Self-care skills, specifically skills for coping with frustrations without reaching burnout, are also included.

Advocacy dispositions are necessary to provide the developmental base for advocacy knowledge and skills (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). As described earlier, these dispositions involve attitudes, values, and beliefs that drive and guide advocacy action (e.g., accepting advocacy as a professional role, altruism, willingness to risk, and need to eliminate social inequities and barriers). Further, one's existing dispositions are not easily subject to change. If school counselors do not possess an advocacy disposition, it will not be possible to develop knowledge and skill areas to their fullest nor the propensity to use them to advocate (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). For instance, when educational systems are unresponsive to needs of students, professionals lacking an advocacy disposition will usually accept it as a fact of life in a school (Shields, 1989). This belief prevents professionals from advocating and serves to maintain the status quo (Fiedler, 2000). Likewise, if a disposition toward advocacy is present, it is more likely that other competencies will be developed and used (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). The advocacy competencies, the necessary developmental progression, and the methods of instructional delivery and enhancement are important considerations for the preparation of school counselors for advocacy (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005).



## **Preparation for Advocacy and School Counselor Education**

Although advocacy has long been an expected professional responsibility, it has lacked a framework for its use and preparation (Brawley, 1997; Brunson, 2002; Ezell, 1994; Fiedler, 2000; Lombardi, 1986; Rudolf, 2003; Toporek, 2000). A positive relationship has been found to exist between advocacy competency development and the frequency of advocating for practitioners (Ezell, 1994). Professionals often fail to advocate because they lack advocacy competencies (Ezell, 1994, 2001; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Toporek, 2000). The process involved in the preparation of school counselors for advocacy begins with a school counselor's concept of professional identity which, in turn, influences the professional actions taken and how they are approached. Created initially during one's pre-service preparation, professional identity evolves during entry into the profession, and continues to develop through one's professional career (Brott & Myers, 1999). Professionally related tasks, interactions, decisions, and experiences in collaboration, negotiation, and confrontation become an integral and dynamic process of identity development (Brott & Myers, 1999). During the counselor preparation program, counselor educators act as socialization agents, providing conceptual and experiential learning that facilitates the cyclical identity developmental process (Auxier, Hughes, & Kline, 2003; Brott & Myers, 1999). Because advocacy has become an essential professional role for school counselors, it requires a significant focus during pre-service preparation (Bradley, 1978; Chapin, Russell, Gillig, S., et al., 2002; Johnson, 2000).

Johnson (2000) used the word *conundrum* in comparing the professional identity preparation of school counselors with the struggles likely to be faced when entering the field. While Lopez (2002) suggested that school counselors can be powerful advocates when provided the preparation and tools needed, Hart and Jacoby (1992) suggested that in some counselor preparation programs school counselors might perceive that they are expected to accept whatever they find existing in the school setting. Preparing school counselors with individual and group counseling skills and standard public relations and marketing strategies is not sufficient preparation for advocacy. School counselor preparation must also emphasize and focus counselor knowledge and skills on advocacy and what is needed to facilitate change (Field & Baker, 2005; Johnson, 2000; Sears & Granello, 2002). In order to effectively advocate for all students and the counseling program, school counselors need a disposition toward their advocacy role as an agent

of change in their schools and a broad understanding of strategies and specific skills for facilitating change (Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Myers et al., 2002).

Holcomb-McCoy, Bryan, and Rahill (2002) noted that CACREP (2001) standards do require all graduate students in accredited programs to have curricular experiences and demonstrate knowledge and skills in leadership, systemic change processes, and advocacy for students and for effective school counseling programs. All program specialties must include advocacy processes needed to address institutional and social barriers that impede access, equity, and success for clients; the counselor's roles in social justice, advocacy, and conflict resolution; the nature of biases, prejudices, processes of intentional and unintentional oppression and discrimination, and cultural self-awareness. Additionally, accredited school counseling programs must also include leadership strategies to enhance school learning environments; knowledge of community, environmental, and institutional opportunities that enhance and barriers that impede student success and development; advocacy for all students and for effective school counseling programs; systems theories and relationships among and between community, family, and school systems, how they interact to influence the students and each system; and theories, models, and processes of consultation and change with teachers, administrators, other school personnel, parents, community groups, agencies and students (CACREP, 2001). However, Myers et al. (2002) noted that standards for advocacy preparation should also specify the methods and techniques necessary to ensure counselors accept advocacy as integral to their roles and acquire essential advocacy skills.

School counseling preparation programs must become more effective in preparing counselors to function as advocates and facilitators of systemic change by teaching the conceptual foundation and skills needed to facilitate change, including how to advocate for all students and use data and technology to facilitate needed change (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Field & Baker, 2005; Hansen, 2003; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Sears & Granello 2002). Borders (2002) noted that school counselors have unique skills and insights; however, learning how to negotiate needs in a particular school context and acquiring adaptability skills to accomplish this are likely the key missing components in school counselor education.

At times, school counselor preparation programs have been resistant to change and lacked responsiveness to national models and approaches such as advocacy (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Aubrey, 1978; Bradley, 1978; Education Trust, 2001; Perusse, Goodnough, & Noel,

2001). For example, Aubrey (1978) noted that 12 years after ASCA and the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) identified consultation to be an essential school counselor function, few counselor preparation programs had incorporated a consulting emphasis. In a more current example, Perusse et al. (2001) found, in a survey of school counselor educators, that program leaders felt their preparation program reflected the essential elements of recent proposed reforms and that method of instruction, course content, field experiences, and supervision sufficiently prepared school counselors. However, Perusse et al. (2001) concluded national standards were not being used consistently in counselor preparation programs.

Advocacy models (e.g., Eriksen, 1997; Fiedler, 2000) that describe stages or steps in the advocacy process are not commonly taught in counselor preparation programs (Trusty & Brown, 2005). School counselor preparation programs should provide a more inclusive approach to developmental theory, processes, and mechanisms of change (Paisley, 2001). According to Akos and Gallasi (2004), school counselor preparation must include perspectives to conceptualize the school culture and system as a target for interventions and as a major part of the developmental advocacy role. In addition, school counseling students can be purposefully taught a focused role that includes advocacy and leadership skills to impact systemic functions and promote development in individuals and systems leadership. Akos and Galassi (2004) proposed a framework for the preparation of school counselors as developmental advocates, seeking to enhance students' strengths and competence. Developmental advocacy requires school counselors to exercise initiative, leadership, and advocacy not only in efforts to remove barriers that impede student learning, but also to promote school policies, opportunities, and activities that enhance academic, career, and personal-social development for all students (Akos & Galassi, 2004).

Instructional delivery approaches for advocacy preparation include infusion of advocacy competencies into the existing course structure for the program or redefining the preparation program mission statement around advocacy and restructuring and rebuilding courses around the mission (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Myers et al., 2002; Osborne et al., 1998). Curriculum materials and resources for advocacy must also be developed for use in advocacy preparation (Chapin et al., 2002). Examples of infusion of advocacy into preparation programs include various student advocacy projects undertaken for counselor education course work at Northern Arizona University (DeVoss, 2004), and situational scenarios used at the University of Tennessee at

Knoxville (McClam & Woodside, 2004). Assertiveness can be taught by role playing different techniques for communicating needs and grievances, differentiating between assertive and aggressive action (Fitch et al., 2001). In considering preparation approaches in similar fields, Brunson (2002) developed a model to provide a consistent and sequenced approach to advocacy instruction. Brawley (1997) noted social work programs often address advocacy in macro-practice courses such as policy practice or community social work.

As one example of advocacy preparation in school counseling, Osborne et al. (1998) described a preparation program where school counselors are prepared to be proactive educators, change agents, and advocates. Based on a social advocacy model, the program was built around the philosophy that professionals take individual or collective action to correct injustices or improve conditions that may benefit individuals or groups. The program mission is to prepare professionals as agents of social change and leaders who stand for social, economic, and political justice. This focus is infused throughout the program including the application and selection process for admission to the counselor education program, a curriculum with course requirements designed around social advocacy strategies, faculty modeling the social advocacy orientation, and assignments to identify a condition and create instructional strategies for a final portfolio.

As noted earlier, an advocacy disposition is the fundamental base for the development of advocacy knowledge and skills and for the propensity to advocate (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Due to the nature of attitudes, values, and belief systems, pre-existing dispositions are not easily changed (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). The addition of the advocacy role requires a somewhat different disposition for school counseling candidates which may need to be reflected in program admissions criteria and processes (Stone & Hansen, 2002). Stone and Hansen (2002) described criteria and procedures used at two universities (the University of North Florida and California State University, Northridge) to select graduate students with the greatest promise of becoming leaders, advocates, and change agents in schools. Major consideration is given to candidate characteristics, including a willingness to challenge the status quo, critical thinking ability in social situations, and an eagerness to be proactive from the core attitudes, thinking, and behavior fundamental to preparing school counselors. The application process includes three letters of recommendation focusing on a candidate's past advocacy and leadership behavior, and interviews to assess

leadership experiences and personal leadership qualities, experience in overcoming obstacles, self-awareness, flexibility, and ideas about how schools could be more effective. Personal and social consciousness skills and attitudes regarding educational equity and social justice, leadership, collaboration, and team building skills were considered the most critical.

## **Summary**

In summary, advocacy has helped to shape the evolution of school counseling (Herr, 2002; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Paisley & McMahon, 2001), and program advocacy and leadership continue to be needed by school counselors to create and implement comprehensive programs that benefit all students (Aubrey, 1978; Brott & Myers, 1999; Campbell & Dahir, 1997; Fitch et al., 2001; Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998, 2002; Kuranz, 2002; Shoffner & Williamson, 2000; Sink, 2002; Sink & Yillik-Downer, 2001; Wells & Ritter, 1979).

In the present context, the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) has created national structures to support the advocacy role (ASCA, 2003, 2004a, 2004b; Campbell & Dahir, 1997). The National Standards for School Counseling Programs (Campbell & Dahir, 1997) defined what students should know and be able to do as a result of involvement in school counseling. The ASCA National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (ASCA, 2003) specifically identified advocacy as an essential role for the school counselor to ensure equity in access and success in educational opportunities for all students. In addition, position statements and ethical standards support the advocacy role (ASCA, 2004a).

It appears, however, that in order to be effective advocates for students, school counselors must first successfully advocate for the school counseling program and for their professional role in the school (House & Hayes, 2002; Isaacs, 2003; Sears & Granello, 2002; Sink, 2002). Advocacy is professionally and personally risky and many school counselors have been unwilling or unable to facilitate meaningful change (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Change requires professionals who will be advocates (Fiedler, 2000; Fullan, 2001; Kuranz, 2002). A transformed role for the school counselor is envisioned involving action as a catalyst for change throughout the school and community, ensuring equity in access and success in

educational opportunities for all students through advocacy and systemic change (Borders, 2002; Bradley, 1978; Lapan, 2001; Myers et al., 2002).

A positive relationship was found between advocacy competency development and the frequency of advocating for practitioners (Ezell, 1994). Professionals often fail to advocate because they lack advocacy competencies (Ezell, 1994, 2001; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Toporek, 2000). In order to effectively facilitate individual and systemic change, school counselors need a base of key requisite advocacy competencies (Brown, 2000; Brown & Trusty, 2005; Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Haydock & Sonsteng, 1994; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). These include dispositions (advocacy, family support and empowerment, social advocacy, and ethical), knowledge (of resources, parameters, dispute resolution mechanisms, advocacy models, systems change), and skills (communication, collaboration, problem-assessment, problem-solving, organizational, and self-care) (Trusty & Brown, 2005).

The development of advocacy competencies is critical for school counselors. Without a sufficient disposition toward advocacy, professionals will not be motivated to acquire or use advocacy knowledge and skills (Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Essential competencies involving advocacy dispositions, advocacy models, and communication skills, such as assertiveness, persuasion, and influence needed for political leadership, do not have a focus in many preparation programs (Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dollarhide, 2003; Fiedler, 2000; Field & Baker, 2005; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Professional standards for school counseling preparation (CACREP, 2001) require students in accredited master's degree school counselor preparation programs to have curricular experiences and demonstrate knowledge and skills in leadership, systemic change processes, and advocacy for students and for effective school counseling programs. Less than half of all master's degree school counseling programs, however, are accredited by CACREP (Akos & Galassi, 2004; CACREP, 2006).

## CHAPTER 3 - METHOD

The purposes of this study were to (a) assess the perceptions of school counselor educators relative to the importance of advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills described by Trusty and Brown (2005) for school counselors as they complete the master's degree; (b) assess the perceptions of school counselor educators with respect to the extent to which advocacy competencies are taught in master's degree programs preparing school counselors; and (c) assess the perceptions of school counselor educators relative to the readiness of master's degree program graduates to apply the advocacy competencies. In addition, this study also determined if significant differences of perceptions exist between counselor educators representing CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited school counseling programs.

The research questions addressed by this study included:

1. How do counselor educators rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree school counseling programs?
2. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree school counseling programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?
3. What are counselor educators' perceptions relative to the extent to which advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of their institutions' master's degree school counseling program?
4. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the extent that advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of master's degree school counseling programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?
5. How do counselor educators perceive the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion to apply advocacy competencies?
6. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion, to apply advocacy competencies higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?

The following will be discussed in this chapter: (a) population and sample; (b) selection of participants; (c) survey; (d) survey content validity and reliability; (e) procedures; (f) research hypotheses; and (g) data analysis.

## **Population and Sample**

The population for this study was all counselor educators who teach in school counseling master's degree programs in the United States. A listing of master's degree programs in school counseling was identified using four sources. *Counselor Preparation: Programs, Faculty, Trends* (Clawson, Henderson, Schweiger, & Collins, 2004) provided detailed information and contacts for entry level counselor preparation programs in all counseling specialties for institutions responding to a self-report survey. *Graduate Programs in Education* (Thomson-Peterson's, 2004), developed in collaboration with ETS and the GRE Board, included information on graduate degree programs in education including counselor education. A current Internet listing of CACREP-accredited programs in all accredited specialties was obtained from the CACREP Website ([www.cacrep.org](http://www.cacrep.org)). Entries were cross-referenced to create valid, mutually exclusive subpopulations. Following an initial listing of 394 institutional programs, institutional Websites were visited to verify program identification. Several institutions identified in other sources were found to offer only minimal coursework acceptable for state certification as a school counselor or offered a master's degree with a different specialty emphasis (e.g., Community Counseling) and were thus excluded from the study population. The final study population included 374 counselor education institutions identified as offering master's degree programs for school counseling. There were 173 school counselor preparation programs located in the U.S. that had voluntarily sought and were granted CACREP accreditation and an additional 201 programs were identified that were not accredited by CACREP.

## **Selection of Participants**

This study focused on the variability of two mutually exclusive subpopulations, and stratified proportional sampling was used to select participants. In the first stratification, the 374 master's degree programs were separated based on CACREP-accreditation status: 173 CACREP-accredited programs and 201 non-CACREP-accredited programs. Using recommendations of Dillman (2000) relative to sample size, a sample of 250 counselor educators serving as school



counseling program coordinators in school counseling master's degree programs was used. To maintain proportionality of participant selection, 115 CACREP accredited programs (46 %) and 135 non-CACREP programs (54 %), were included in the sample.

Additionally, to assure a geographically stratified representative national sample, the five regions of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) were used to select participants in proportion to regional representation. The ACES regions were as follows: Southern (Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia); North Atlantic (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont); North Central (Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wisconsin); Rocky Mountain (Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming) and Western (Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington).

For each stratum, programs were selected based on percentages reflecting proportionality of region representation. For example, if 42% of all CACREP programs were located in the Southern Region, 42% of CACREP participants in the sample were selected from the Southern Region. Following selection of the institutions for the sample, a listing of the school counseling program coordinators at the identified institutions was developed. If an appropriate contact name was not listed in the sources, the college or university Website was consulted for identification of an appropriate contact followed by a telephone or e-mail contact to the department to identify the current school counseling program coordinator or the counselor educator most familiar with the school counseling program. Based on the response to the contact, the information obtained was added to the participant listing. Institutions for which contacts could not be determined were replaced in the sample with another institution from within that region.

## **The Survey**

A survey was developed for use in the study (Appendix A). Survey item content was based on the advocacy literature and the survey format followed Dillman's (2000) recommendations for an increased participant response rate. Survey items were organized primarily into two sections; the first to gather data related to development of the competencies and the second to gather demographic data. In the first section, participants were asked to

respond to items regarding the advocacy competencies. Using a 5-point rating scale, participants were asked to rate (a) their perceptions of importance of the advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill development in master's degree school counseling programs; (b) the extent to which advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill development are taught as part of the master's degree school counseling program in their institution; and (c) their perceptions relative to the readiness of their master's degree school counseling program graduates at the time of degree completion to apply advocacy competencies. Permission to use the advocacy competencies was obtained via e-mail from Dr. Jerry Trusty (Appendix B).

In addition, for descriptive purposes, participants were also asked to identify where and how students in their program are taught the competencies. Participants were asked to: (a) identify whether advocacy competencies are considered in the admissions process for the master's degree program in school counseling, and if so, to describe how; (b) identify whether the competencies are taught primarily in a single course or in multiple courses, to list the course titles where they are taught, and to indicate whether the courses are elective or required; and (c) identify for each of the three competency categories the specific methods used in the program to enhance advocacy competency development (i.e., required text or readings, class discussions/assignments, role play scenarios/ experiential activities, competency assessment with feedback, or others).

In the second section, participants were asked for the following demographic information: (a) participant's title or role in the school counseling program; (b) identification of the university setting as urban, suburban, or rural; (c) the number of credit hours required for the master's degree in school counseling; (d) the number of students admitted annually to the program; and (e) the number of full time and part-time faculty teaching in the program. Finally, the last item provided participants an opportunity to share additional thoughts, ideas, or issues regarding the preparation of school counselors for advocacy. These data were analyzed by listing participant responses by accreditation status and identifying themes and trends that appeared to be present.

### **Establishing Content Validity and Reliability of the Survey**

Input from professors in the field of counselor education was used to determine the appropriateness of the survey content, design, and format. As part of the survey development

process, two professors of counselor education currently teaching courses in school counselor preparation programs at universities in the United States and familiar with design of surveys and/or advocacy were solicited to review and provide input regarding the content, clarity, and format of the items. In addition, two other counselor educators were asked to complete the survey to determine the approximate amount of time for survey completion, to verify clarity of questions, and to indicate problems experienced when completing the survey. Following survey revisions, a pilot was conducted with a sample of three counselor educators who teach in school counseling master's degree programs.

To assess reliability, a Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) was calculated to assess internal consistency for the first three survey item scales. For the scale of the first item, assessing perceptions of the importance of advocacy competency inclusion, analysis yielded an  $\alpha = .891$ . For the scale of the second item, assessing perceptions relative to the extent advocacy competencies were being taught, analysis yielded an  $\alpha = .906$ . In addition, for the scale of the third item, assessing perceptions of graduate readiness to apply advocacy competencies, analysis resulted in  $\alpha = .923$ .

## **Procedures**

The guidelines for research involving human subjects regulated by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Kansas State University were followed in this study. Additionally, the Ethical Standards of the American Counseling Association and the American School Counselor Association were followed in the completion of this study.

Following Dillman's (2000) recommendations for increasing the survey response rate, a five-step personalization process was used. Contact letters were addressed to each individual participant and were personally signed in a contrasting ink by the researcher and researcher's advisor. A code number was placed on each survey to track the institution for follow-up contacts. All envelopes included hand-affixed postage stamps.

A first contact letter (Appendix C) was mailed to survey participants identifying the nature of the survey, soliciting participation in the study, and advising them to expect receipt of a mail survey within approximately one week for completion and return. One week following the mailing of the first contact letter, a survey, a personalized cover letter (Appendix D), and a self-addressed, hand-stamped return envelope were mailed to the participants.

One week after mailing of the survey, a hand-stamped postcard (Appendix E) was sent to all participants, thanking them for their willingness to participate in the study and as a reminder to return the completed survey if they had not yet done so. An e-mail address and phone number were also included in case the survey was misplaced or not received.

Two weeks after the postcard mailing, those who had not responded were sent a second personalized letter (Appendix F), a replacement survey, and a hand-stamped, addressed return envelope. Finally, two weeks following the second survey mailing, those not responding were sent an e-mail message again requesting their participation in completion of the survey for the study (Appendix G).

Upon receipt of each completed survey, the tracking number was recorded and then removed from the survey to protect the confidentiality of individual responses. After the first survey mailing, a 32% response rate ( $n = 80$ ) was obtained. The final response rate was 54.4% ( $n = 136$ ). Additionally, two unusable surveys were received. Usable responses were received from 69 CACREP-accredited programs and 67 non-CACREP- accredited programs. Survey respondents represented all five ACES regions.

### **Research Hypotheses**

Following were the research hypotheses of this study:

1. Counselor educators in CACREP-accredited school counseling programs will rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs.
2. Counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs will rate the extent that advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of master's degree school counseling programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs.
3. Counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs will rate the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates, at the time of degree completion, to apply advocacy competencies, higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP- accredited programs.

## **Data Analysis**

Data from returned surveys was entered into an Excel spreadsheet program, and summarized through descriptive statistics. Additionally, to answer the research questions and hypotheses, the data were entered into an SPSS 14.0 computerized statistical program. Descriptive statistics, means, and standard deviations, were calculated for each item. Inferential statistics (independent sample *t*-tests) were then conducted to determine if there were significant differences in mean ratings between participants of CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited programs for each of the 15 advocacy competencies identified in Survey Items 1 to 3. To maintain an alpha of .05, the Bonferroni adjustment was used to account for multiple *t*-tests conducted (Asher, 1976; Green & Salkind, 2005; Hopkins, Glass, & Hopkins, 1987; Keppel, 1991). The results were then compared with the adjusted alpha level ( $.05/15 = 0.003$ ) to determine significance of mean differences.

## **CHAPTER 4 - RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

This study was designed to assess the perceptions of school counselor educators regarding the degree of importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill competencies (Trusty & Brown, 2005) in master's degree school counseling programs; the extent to which the advocacy competencies are taught in the program; and the relative readiness of program graduates to apply the advocacy competencies. Additionally, this study also investigated whether there were significant differences between the responses of participants associated with CACREP-accredited and those with non-CACREP-accredited school counselor education programs. A description of the characteristics of the study participants, the results of the study, and a discussion of the results are presented in this chapter.

### **Description of the Participants**

Stratified proportional sampling was used to identify study participants. A sample of 250 counselor educators teaching in master's degree programs in school counseling was identified and a survey was sent to each participant. The total number of CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited master's degree school counseling programs within each region of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES), the regional percentage of the total population, the number selected as study participants, the number of participants returning surveys, and the response rate by region and accreditation status are shown in Table 1 and Table 2. One hundred thirty-six surveys were returned (54.4%), representing 69 CACREP-accredited programs and 67 non-CACREP-accredited programs.

Study participants were asked to indicate their current title related to the school counseling graduate program. The majority of survey respondents (58.8%,  $n = 80$ ) indicated the title of School Counseling Program Coordinator; this represented 62.3% of CACREP-accredited and 55.2% of non-CACREP-accredited respondents. Another 16.9% ( $n = 23$ ) reported a title of Department Head or Chairperson; this represented 8.7% of CACREP and 25.4% of non-CACREP respondents. Other titles were identified by 24% ( $n = 33$ ) of respondents, representing 29% of CACREP and 19.4% of non-CACREP respondents. Additional titles included Program Director or Coordinator, Assistant Director or Co-Chairperson, Counseling Station/Unit

Coordinator, CACREP Liaison, Coordinator of Companion Institution for Transforming School Counseling Initiative, Professor, Assistant Professor, Faculty Member, Doctoral Coordinator, and Internship Coordinator.

Table 1: *Frequencies, Percents, and Response Rates of Surveyed CACREP Programs by ACES Regions*

Region	Total #	% of CACREP	# Surveyed	# Responding	Response Rate (%)
Southern	73	42	48	24	50.0
North Atlantic	23	13	15	10	66.7
North Central	52	30	35	23	65.7
Rocky Mountain	14	8	9	7	77.8
Western	11	7	8	5	62.5
Total	173	100	115	69	60.0

Table 2: *Frequencies, Percents, and Response Rates of Surveyed Non-CACREP Programs by ACES Regions*

Region	Total #	% Non-CACREP	# Surveyed	# Responding	Response Rate (%)
Southern	69	34	46	21	45.7
North Atlantic	55	28	38	20	52.6
North Central	48	24	32	16	50.0
Rocky Mountain	9	4	5	2	40.0
Western	20	10	14	8	57.1
Total	201	100	135	67	49.6

Study participants were also asked to describe their university setting as urban, suburban, or rural. Of the 136 survey respondents, 44.9% ( $n = 61$ ) indicated their institutional setting was

urban; another 27.9% ( $n = 38$ ) indicated a rural setting; and 27.2% ( $n = 37$ ) identified suburban settings.

## **Results**

### ***Importance of Including Advocacy Competencies in Master's Degree Programs***

How do counselor educators rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree school counseling programs? Participants were asked to rate the degree of importance (1 = Not Important to 5 = Very Important) for including the identified advocacy competencies in a master's degree program for school counselors. The number of participants, mean ratings, and standard deviations for responses to the 15 items are presented in Table 3.

Both samples rated the 15 advocacy competencies between moderately and very important for inclusion in master's degree programs. For CACREP-accredited respondents, the five highest mean ratings were for Communication Skills (4.87), Collaboration Skills (4.81), Ethical Disposition (4.77), Social Advocacy Disposition (4.71), and Family Support and Empowerment Disposition (4.68). For non-CACREP-accredited, the highest mean ratings were for Communication Skills (4.87), Ethical Disposition (4.85), Collaboration Skills (4.79), Knowledge of Parameters (4.64), and Advocacy Disposition (4.64).

The middle five mean ratings for respondents associated with CACREP programs included Advocacy Disposition (4.64), Problem-Assessment Skills (4.52), Self-Care Skills (4.51), Knowledge of Parameters (4.48), Knowledge of Resources (4.45), and Knowledge of Systems Change (4.45). For respondents of non-CACREP-accredited programs, Self-Care Skills (4.60), Problem-Assessment Skills (4.53), Problem-Solving Skills (4.46), Family Support/Empowerment Disposition (4.45), and Organizational Skills (4.39) constituted the middle five mean ratings.

The lowest mean ratings for CACREP-accredited respondents were for Problem-Solving Skills (4.43), Organizational Skills (4.41), Knowledge of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (4.25), and Knowledge of Advocacy Models (4.04). For non-CACREP-accredited respondents, the lowest mean ratings were for Social Advocacy Disposition (4.38), Knowledge of Parameters (4.37), Knowledge of Systems Change (4.24), Knowledge of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (4.21), and Knowledge of Advocacy Models (3.86).



Table 3: *Mean Ratings, Standard Deviations, and t-Values for Importance of Advocacy Competency Inclusion*

Advocacy Competency	CACREP			Non-CACREP			<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	
Advocacy disposition	4.64	.51	69	4.64	.62	66	0.013
Family support/empowerment disposition	4.68	.63	69	4.45	.66	66	2.040
Social advocacy disposition	4.71	.60	69	4.38	.89	66	2.550
Ethical disposition	4.77	.46	69	4.85	.40	65	- 1.043
Knowledge of resources	4.45	.61	69	4.37	.78	67	0.639
Knowledge of parameters	4.48	.70	69	4.64	.51	67	- 1.521
Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms	4.25	.70	69	4.21	.83	66	0.260
Knowledge of advocacy models	4.04	.79	69	3.86	.91	66	1.225
Knowledge of systems change	4.45	.65	69	4.24	.91	66	1.519
Communication skills	4.87	.38	69	4.87	.34	67	0.063
Collaboration skills	4.81	.43	69	4.79	.45	67	0.274
Problem-assessment skills	4.52	.66	69	4.53	.66	66	- 0.076
Problem-solving skills	4.43	.63	69	4.46	.68	67	- 0.321
Organizational skills	4.41	.71	69	4.39	.65	66	0.101
Self-care skills	4.51	.70	69	4.60	.63	67	- 0.786

*Note.* Ratings were made on a 5-point scale (1 = Not Important to 5 = Very Important).

### ***Comparing the Importance Ratings for Inclusion of Advocacy Competencies***

Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master’s degree programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP accredited programs? In this study, it was hypothesized that counselor educators in CACREP-accredited school counseling programs would rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master’s degree programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs. Using

independent sample *t*-tests, CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited group means were compared on each of the 15 items to test the hypothesis. Results of the *t*-tests are shown in Table 3. There were no significant differences found in the independent samples *t*-tests (with a Bonferroni adjustment;  $\alpha = .05/15 = .003$ ).

### ***Extent of Teaching Advocacy Competencies in Master's Degree Programs***

What are counselor educators' perceptions relative to the extent to which advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are taught as part of their institution's master's degree school counseling program? Participants were asked to rate the extent to which the competencies were taught (1 = Not Taught to 5 = Fully Taught) in their master's degree program in school counseling. The number of participants, mean ratings, and standard deviations for participant responses to the 15 items are shown in Table 4.

For CACREP-accredited respondents, the five highest mean ratings were for Communication Skills (4.68), Ethical Disposition (4.35), Collaboration Skills (4.35), Advocacy Disposition (4.19), and Social Advocacy Disposition (4.00). For non-CACREP-accredited respondents, the highest mean ratings were for Communication Skills (4.70), Ethical Disposition (4.49), Collaboration Skills (4.38), Knowledge of Parameters (4.08) and Family Support/Empowerment Disposition (4.03).

The five middle mean ratings for CACREP respondents included Family Support/Empowerment Disposition (3.96), Problem-Assessment Skills (3.87), Self-Care Skills (3.84), Knowledge of Systems Change (3.81), and Organizational Skills (3.80). For non-CACREP-accredited respondents, the middle five mean ratings included Advocacy Disposition (3.94), Problem-Assessment Skills (3.94), Self-Care Skills (3.83), Social Advocacy Disposition (3.82), and Organizational Skills (3.74).

The five lowest mean ratings for CACREP-accredited respondents were for Knowledge of Parameters (3.75), Problem-Solving Skills (3.71), Knowledge of Resources (3.64), Knowledge of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (3.44), and Knowledge of Advocacy Models (3.06). For non-CACREP-accredited respondents, the lowest mean ratings included Knowledge of Systems Change (3.66), Knowledge of Resources (3.66), Problem-Solving Skills (3.64), Knowledge of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (3.48), and Knowledge of Advocacy Models (2.85).

Table 4: *Mean Ratings, Standard Deviations, and t-Values for Teaching of Advocacy Competencies*

Advocacy Competency	CACREP			Non-CACREP			<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	
Advocacy disposition	4.19	.88	69	3.94	.96	66	1.574
Family support/empowerment disposition	3.96	.93	69	4.03	.83	65	- 0.487
Social advocacy disposition	4.00	.92	69	3.82	1.01	66	1.094
Ethical disposition	4.35	.92	69	4.49	.66	66	- 0.989
Knowledge of resources	3.64	.77	69	3.66	.90	67	- 0.133
Knowledge of parameters	3.75	.88	69	4.08	.89	67	- 2.110
Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms	3.44	.99	69	3.48	1.04	67	- 0.246
Knowledge of advocacy models	3.06	.96	66	2.85	1.67	66	1.141
Knowledge of systems change	3.81	.99	69	3.66	1.11	67	0.860
Communication skills	4.68	.70	69	4.70	.55	67	- 0.188
Collaboration skills	4.35	.91	69	4.38	.77	66	0.205
Problem-assessment skills	3.87	.88	68	3.94	.80	67	- 0.503
Problem-solving skills	3.71	.99	69	3.64	.78	66	0.481
Organizational skills	3.80	.98	69	3.74	.98	66	0.321
Self-care skills	3.84	.98	69	3.83	.97	66	0.043

*Note.* Ratings were made on a 5-point scale (1 = Not Taught to 5 = Fully Taught).

### ***Comparing the Ratings for Teaching Advocacy Competencies***

Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the extent that advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of their master's degree school counseling program higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs? It was hypothesized that counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs would rate the extent that advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill competencies are being taught as part of

master's degree school counseling programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs. Independent sample *t*-tests were used to compare CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited group means on each of the 15 items. There were no significant differences found in the independent samples *t*-tests (with a Bonferroni adjustment;  $\alpha = .05/15 = .003$ ).

### ***Readiness of Master's Degree Completers to Apply Advocacy Competencies***

How do counselor educators perceive the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates, at the time of degree completion, to apply advocacy competencies? Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they believed their master's degree program completers, at the time of graduation, are ready to apply the advocacy competencies (1 = Not Ready to 5 = Completely Ready). The number of participants, mean ratings, and standard deviations for participant responses to the 15 items are shown in Table 5.

For respondents from CACREP-accredited programs, the five highest mean ratings for readiness to apply the competencies were for Communication Skills (4.49), Collaboration Skills (4.16), Ethical Disposition (4.10), Family Support and Empowerment (3.84), and Advocacy Disposition (3.78). For respondents from non-CACREP-accredited programs, the highest mean ratings were for Communication Skills (4.56), Ethical Disposition (4.19), Collaboration Skills (4.18), Family Support/Empowerment (3.81), and Advocacy Disposition (3.76).

The middle five mean ratings for respondents associated with CACREP-accredited programs included Problem Assessment Skills (3.76), Problem-Solving Skills (3.73), Self-Care Skills (3.70), Social Advocacy Disposition (3.63), and Organization Skills (3.61). For respondents associated with non-CACREP-accredited programs, Problem-Assessment Skills (3.74), Knowledge of Parameters (3.72), Problem-Solving Skills (3.67), Self-Care Skills (3.67), and Organizational Skills (3.63) constituted the middle five mean ratings.

The lowest five mean ratings for respondents from CACREP-accredited programs were for Knowledge of Parameters (3.61), Systems Change (3.58), Knowledge of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (3.43), Knowledge of Resources (3.42), and Knowledge of Advocacy Models (3.00). For respondents associated with non-CACREP-accredited programs, the lowest mean ratings included Knowledge of Resources (3.58), Social Advocacy Disposition (3.55),

Knowledge of Dispute Resolution Mechanisms (3.47), Knowledge of Systems Change (3.43), and Knowledge of Advocacy Models (2.85).

Table 5: *Mean Ratings, Standard Deviations, and t-Values for Graduate Readiness to Apply Advocacy Competencies*

Advocacy Competency	CACREP			Non-CACREP			<i>t</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	
Advocacy disposition	3.78	.79	67	3.76	.91	67	0.101
Family support/empowerment disposition	3.84	.85	67	3.81	.82	67	0.207
Social advocacy disposition	3.63	.78	67	3.55	.99	67	0.486
Ethical disposition	4.10	.87	67	4.19	.76	67	- 0.632
Knowledge of resources	3.42	.80	67	3.58	.80	67	- 1.187
Knowledge of parameters	3.61	.83	67	3.72	.69	67	- 0.789
Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms	3.43	.86	67	3.47	.92	66	- 0.240
Knowledge of advocacy models	3.00	.86	66	2.85	1.02	67	0.935
Knowledge of systems change	3.58	.89	67	3.43	.99	67	0.919
Communication skills	4.49	.82	67	4.56	.66	66	- 0.526
Collaboration skills	4.16	.91	67	4.18	.76	67	- 0.103
Problem-assessment skills	3.76	.91	66	3.74	.77	66	0.103
Problem-solving skills	3.73	.86	67	3.67	.97	66	0.407
Organizational skills	3.61	.92	67	3.63	.87	67	- 0.097
Self-care skills	3.70	.91	67	3.67	.83	66	0.231

*Note.* Ratings were made on a 5-point scale (1 = Not Ready to 5 = Completely Ready).

### ***Comparing the Ratings for Readiness to Apply Advocacy Competencies***

Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion to apply advocacy competencies higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs? It was hypothesized that counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs would rate the readiness

of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion, to apply the competencies higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs. To test this hypothesis, independent sample *t*-tests were used to compare CACREP and non-CACREP group means on each of the 15 items. Results of the independent samples *t*-tests are shown in Table 5. There were no statistically significant differences found in the independent samples *t*-tests (with a Bonferroni adjustment;  $\alpha = .05/15 = .003$ ).

### ***Description of Program Practices***

Study participants were asked to indicate if advocacy dispositions were considered in the admissions process for their master's degree program in school counseling and, if so, to indicate how the dispositions were being considered. Ninety respondents (66.2%) indicated that their programs did not consider advocacy dispositions in the admissions process. This represented 42 (60.9%) of the CACREP respondents and 48 (71.6%) of non-CACREP respondents. Of the 33.1% ( $n = 45$ ) reporting the consideration of advocacy dispositions in admissions decisions, explanations included two themes. One theme involved characteristics considered essential for being an effective advocate (leadership, standing up for ones values in face of adversity/barriers, attitudes/dispositions toward social justice, and taking initiative). Another theme involved the identification of various methods used to identify advocacy competencies of applicants. One method sought evidence of previous leadership and advocacy experiences through written personal statements, references, and written advocacy essay questions. One respondent stated, "We ask an advocacy question on the application. It's actually a case scenario about a Latino male failing in school. We ask how the counselor would advocate for the student. Applicants must write a response (paragraph)." A second method involved the use of structured interview questions to gain information regarding applicants' advocacy dispositions and experiences. For example, candidates are asked to discuss advocacy articles or describe how they plan to advocate for their clients and for the profession. A third method involved the use of individual or group role play scenarios to check for empathy, social skills, or advocacy awareness of the candidate.

Study participants were also asked to identify where the advocacy competencies (dispositions, knowledge, and skills) are being taught within the master's degree program in school counseling. Twenty-one (15.4%) of 130 respondents indicated that the competencies were being taught primarily in a single required course. These included courses in professional

orientation, social and cultural foundations, ethics, professional seminar, practicum and internship, organizational change, and consultation. In addition, of 124 responses, 86.0% ( $n = 117$ ) reported that the advocacy competencies were being taught in several courses. Of the 114 respondents listing specific course titles, 64.9% ( $n = 74$ ) identified 4 to 6 required courses. Fourteen respondents noted that the advocacy competencies were infused into all required courses in their degree program. The most frequently identified courses were introductory counseling courses (e.g., fundamentals, foundations, or introduction) ( $n = 68$ ), professional orientation and legal and ethical issues ( $n = 56$ ); practicum ( $n = 56$ ); internship ( $n = 52$ ); multicultural or cross cultural counseling ( $n = 42$ ); organizing and managing comprehensive school counseling programs ( $n = 36$ ); consultation and systems consultation ( $n = 27$ ); roles and functions of professional school counselors ( $n = 19$ ); counseling techniques and lab courses ( $n = 18$ ); and educational, developmental, or counseling theories ( $n = 17$ ).

For each of the competency categories (dispositions, knowledge, and skills), study participants were asked to identify methods being used to teach the competencies and to enhance competency development. Frequencies by instructional method reported by survey respondents are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: *Frequencies of Instructional Methods Used to Enhance Advocacy Competencies*

	Advocacy Dispositions	Advocacy Knowledge	Advocacy Skills
Required text or readings	77	100	75
Class discussions/assignments	105	101	99
Role play scenarios/experiential activities	58	57	98
Competency assessment with feedback	50	60	68

A required text or readings was used in 86.0% of the programs to support the development of advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills. Of those, 43.4% ( $n = 59$ ) indicated use of a required text or readings for all three competency categories; 8.1% ( $n = 11$ ) for

knowledge and skills only; 11.8% ( $n = 16$ ) for dispositions and knowledge only; 17.7% ( $n = 24$ ) for knowledge only; and 3.7% ( $n = 5$ ) for skills only. Class discussions and assignments were used by 90.4% of the programs, with 57.4% ( $n = 78$ ) using these methods for all three competency categories. Slightly higher usage was reported by CACREP-accredited programs (65.2%,  $n = 45$ ) than non-CACREP-accredited programs (49.3%,  $n = 33$ ).

Role-play scenarios and experiential activities were being used in 78.7% of the programs to teach the competencies. In 28.7% of the programs, these activities were used for all three categories; an additional 25.0% ( $n = 34$ ) for skill competencies only; 8.8% ( $n = 12$ ) for disposition and skills only; and 9.6% ( $n = 13$ ) for knowledge and skill competencies only. The use of competency assessment with feedback activities was identified for 53.7% of the programs, predominantly to teach the advocacy skills competencies. Other instructional methods identified included guest speakers, movies, case studies, various assigned advocacy field experiences, collaboration projects, or volunteer work in schools under supervision; papers, exams, and continuous assessment processes; a critique of school counseling program, use of *ASCA Program Audit*; use of school report cards and school improvement plans; and technology.

Of the 125 respondents who identified semester credit hour requirements for a master's degree in school counseling, 22 non-CACREP-accredited programs required less than 48 credit hours. Sixty-two programs (CACREP-accredited,  $n = 30$ ; non-CACREP-accredited,  $n = 32$ ) required 48 semester hours. Forty-one programs (CACREP-accredited,  $n = 26$ ; non-CACREP-accredited,  $n = 15$ ) required between 41 and 60 semester credit hours. Additionally, 9 programs required 71 to 90 quarter hours. Of the 136 programs represented by respondents, 13.2% ( $n = 18$ ) admitted 10 students or fewer to their school counseling master's program annually; 40.4% ( $n = 55$ ) admitted 11 to 20 students; 16.2% ( $n = 22$ ) admitted 21 to 30 students; 9.6% ( $n = 13$ ) admitted 31 to 40; and 20.6% ( $n = 28$ ) admitted more than 40 students. Additionally, of the 132 respondents indicating the number of full-time faculty teaching in their school counseling master's program, 28.8% ( $n = 37$ ) identified 2 or fewer; 31.1% ( $n = 41$ ) indicated 3 to 4; and 40.2% ( $n = 53$ ) reported 5 or more full-time faculty. Of the 80 programs where respondents identified part-time faculty members teaching in the school counseling program, 37.5% ( $n = 30$ ) identified 2 or fewer; 18.8% ( $n = 15$ ) identified 3 to 4; and 43.8% ( $n = 35$ ) identified 5 or more part-time faculty.



## Discussion

Three major themes arose from the findings of this study. The first related to the importance of including the advocacy competencies identified by Trusty and Brown (2005) in the school counseling master's program. The results of this study show both CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited faculty members appear to be in agreement with the importance of including the 15 advocacy competencies. Both rated all 15 advocacy competencies between moderately and very important for inclusion in master's degree programs. The highest mean ratings for both groups were Communication Skills, Ethical Disposition, and Collaboration Skills, three foundations of the nature and profession of school counseling. Historically, while an advocacy disposition might not have been considered as important for inclusion, there was a very high agreement with the inclusion of the advocacy disposition with mean ratings ranking it in the top six for both CACREP and non-CACREP respondents. There was a larger difference in the rank order for social advocacy, with the fourth highest ranking among CACREP-accredited faculty compared to a ranking of eleventh among non-CACREP-accredited; however, there was still relatively high agreement for its inclusion.

The results rating the teaching of advocacy competencies indicated that of the 15 competencies, knowledge of advocacy models had the lowest mean ratings for both CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited programs. Additionally, several program practice descriptions related to advocacy models. For example, one respondent commented, "Our program has not looked at advocacy as a separate skill or theory base. My answers reflect advocacy skills only and not 'advocacy' as essentially an entire competency area in and of itself." The results and program descriptions appear to support the contention of Trusty and Brown (2005) that advocacy models are not commonly taught in counselor preparation programs. In looking for possible explanations, there would appear to be less agreement with Trusty and Brown (2005) on this competency, as sample means from both CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited faculty also placed Knowledge of Advocacy Models as the least important of the 15 competencies for inclusion in the master's degree program. Additionally, it had the lowest mean ratings for the ability of program graduates to apply the competencies. The results for teaching also seem to show, however, more of a focus on dispositions and skills than on the knowledge areas. Further, according to Borders (2002), learning how to negotiate needs in a particular school context and acquiring adaptability skills are likely the key missing

components in school counselor education. One could conclude that the absence of this knowledge could limit school counselors' adaptability to varied advocacy situations, and flexibility in advocacy strategies and responses.

A second theme seen in the results was that on the major questions and in the program descriptions, CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited participants consistently responded more alike than differently. This came as a surprise to the researcher. CACREP accreditation does not indicate that the preparation program is in any way superior to a non-CACREP accredited program. Although non-CACREP-accredited programs are not required to align with the standards, the standards may nevertheless be used as a reference point for institutional decision-making, and thus, directly impact the direction and practice priorities across the profession. For non-accredited programs, comments shared by a number of school counselor educators indicated a trend to align their graduate program similarly to those programs that are accredited. Even several respondents from non-CACREP-accredited programs noted a desire for their programs to become accredited by CACREP in the near future. Other factors (e.g., meeting state department of education requirements, varying dispositions and interest in advocacy held by the counselor educators who teach in the program, political considerations within the department, university structure, or governance) may impact the perceived importance of advocacy within the program as well as the development and implementation of an advocacy curriculum. It should also be noted that advocacy preparation represents one small piece within the complete CACREP-accreditation standards for master's level school counseling programs.

A third theme identified in the study results, program descriptions, and comments involved indications of agreement or disagreement with the literature or trends for preparing school counselors for the role of advocacy. One such area related to the development of an advocacy disposition. An absence of an advocacy disposition will make it extremely difficult if not impossible to develop knowledge and skill areas to their fullest, as well as the tendency to use them to advocate (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). The notion of teaching to develop a disposition was questioned as noted in the following comments from a respondent: "I do not understand what you mean by *teaching* dispositions. We inform students *re* our standards & we assess them according to the enclosed forms on 8 occasions during their training. But teach? . . ." The question that must be answered then, it would seem, is that if the dispositions are not being "taught," how are counselor education programs ensuring that their

students have the dispositions needed to accept the role of advocate? Existing dispositions (attitudes, values, and belief systems) are not easily changed (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Reflective and autonomous thinking and behavior are essential characteristics for advocacy (Fiedler, 2000; Glickman et al., 1998; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Assuming the majority of school counselors have previously been school employees, they are likely conforming and compliant, and have learned to not make waves (Fiedler, 2000; Glickman et al. 1998). Further, according to Stone and Hansen (2002), the addition of the advocacy role requires a somewhat different disposition for school counseling candidates that may need to be reflected in program admissions criteria and processes. Reinforcing this belief, one survey respondent stated, “Advocacy skills are somewhat different from counseling skills. We may need to look for a different type student to admit.” Yet, two-thirds of all respondents indicated that their programs did not consider advocacy dispositions in the admissions process. It would seem that counselor education programs might want to reconsider admission selection criteria and include advocacy dispositions and experiences.

School counselor education programs have been slow to change or add new approaches such as advocacy (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Aubrey, 1978; Bradley, 1978; Education Trust, 2001; Perusse et al., 2001). There seemed to be some support for this idea in responses by participants. As one example, a respondent stated, “I think competency around advocacy skills is essential; the challenge is that many instructors have not been trained to consider this. This also has to be linked to a program philosophy/mission not often present as a priority in programs, yet its integration is essential.” In contrast, another survey respondent stated, “This sounds more like social work and sociology to me. I don’t think it should be a priority in a counseling program, as such. My ratings reflect a counseling stance *not* an advocacy stance.” A third respondent stated, “This is a critical area for school counselor preparation. The belief systems of faculty and candidates need to be challenged before the need for advocacy can sometimes be realized. As faculty, we need to be role models and intentional in our instruction.”

Hart and Jacoby (1992) suggested that in some counselor preparation programs school counselors might perceive that they are expected to accept whatever they find existing in the school setting. Program descriptions and comments of participants seemed to support this possibility. One survey respondent stated, “Some students understand the importance of advocacy, yet still would like us to prepare them for non-counseling tasks.” Intentional or not,

course titles communicate content, focus, context, and relative importance. While most courses within programs were referenced with either *counseling* or *school counseling* in the title, 21% of non-CACREP-accredited programs, compared to 5% of CACREP-accredited, identified at least one course which used *guidance* or *pupil personnel services* in the course title (e.g., Principles of Guidance, Organization and Administration of Guidance Programs). Historically, *pupil personnel services* originated many years ago to encompass guidance and other on-demand services (e.g., health, attendance, psychological, and social work). Could it be that a school counselor's willingness to accept traditional *guidance counselor* roles (completion of clerical and administrative tasks) may inadvertently be reinforced through counselor preparation course titles? In contrast, it should be noted that some course titles identified in this study focused specifically on the new vision for role of school counseling and appeared to fit well with themes associated with school reform movements and counselors' role in advocacy (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Field & Baker, 2005; Hansen, 2003; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Sears & Granello 2002). These included the following: Systems Approaches in Schools; Social Systems; Systems Consultation; Action Research; Crisis Intervention and Conflict Resolution; Student Assistance Seminar; Advocacy in School Counseling; Leadership, Advocacy, and Change; Leadership and Advocacy in Schools; Teaming, Collaboration, & Advocacy; Social Justice Counseling; Legal and Social Change; Sociological Perspectives; Developmental Change; and Career and Academic Counseling/Advisement in K-12 Settings.

The apparent trend of school counselor preparation programs was to deliver advocacy competency preparation through infusion into two or more required courses rather than providing a focus in one comprehensive advocacy course. The strength of this approach would appear to be student understanding that advocacy is an expected role with applications in many areas. This approach, however, could also risk fragmentation and lack a comprehensive, systematic, and sequential advocacy curriculum for each student. As mentioned earlier, a separate advocacy course would appear to place a significant value on the importance of advocacy to the role of the school counselor. As a result, organizing a comprehensive, systematic, and sequential approach would appear to be a difficult but essential focus for counselor educators. Comments by study participants would seem to agree with this as a focus. For example, one study participant stated, "I think that more systematic exposure and teaching of advocacy skills is essential and would benefit students and ultimately the profession." Another respondent stated, "We have just

recently begun to emphasize the advocacy role and issues of social justice in a more systematic manner.” In addition, Myers et al. (2002) noted that standards for advocacy preparation should also specify the methods and techniques necessary to ensure counselors accept advocacy as integral to their roles and acquire essential advocacy skills. In support of the development of advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills, required text or readings, class discussions and assignments, and role-play scenarios and experiential activities were used in an overwhelming number of programs. However, in comparison, competency assessment with feedback activities was used in slightly over one-half of the programs.

The advocacy competencies, the developmental sequence for learning the competencies, and the methods of instructional delivery and enhancement are important considerations for the preparation of school counselors for advocacy (Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). The development of advocacy competencies is fundamental for school counselors who must continue to advocate for their program, their professional role in the school, and for the students they serve (e.g., Gysbers & Henderson, 2001; Henderson & Gysbers, 1998). In addition, school counselors must be prepared to accept an extension of their role to serve as a catalyst of change, ensuring equity in access and success in educational opportunities for all students through advocacy and systemic change (e.g., House & Hayes, 2002; Isaacs, 2003; Sears & Granello, 2002).

The results of this study indicate general agreement among CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited participants with regard to the competencies as identified by Trusty and Brown (2005). In fact, this study has noted that these two groups appeared to be more alike than different on this subject.

## **CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary**

Advocacy has evolved into an integral role for school counselors, and it is critical for school counselors to function effectively in the contemporary school setting (Field & Baker, 2004). Ezell (1994) reported a positive relationship between advocacy competency development and the frequency of advocating for practitioners. Professionals often fail to advocate because they lack advocacy competencies (Ezell, 1994, 2001; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Toporek, 2000). While the development of advocacy competencies (dispositions, knowledge, and skills) is necessary for effective advocacy (Ezell, 1994, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005), there was reason to believe that school counselor preparation programs may not be preparing school counselors ready to function assertively and proactively as advocates (Akos & Galassi, 2004; Bemak & Chung, 2005; Dollarhide, 2003; Field & Baker, 2004; Hart & Jacoby, 1992; Toporek, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005).

This study was designed to assess the perceptions of school counselor educators regarding the degree of importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill competencies (Trusty & Brown, 2005) in master's degree school counseling programs; the extent to which the advocacy competencies are taught in the program; and the relative readiness of program graduates to apply the advocacy competencies. Additionally, this study also investigated whether there were significant differences between the responses of participants associated with CACREP-accredited and those with non-CACREP-accredited school counselor preparation programs. Stratified proportional sampling was used to identify study participants. A sample of 250 counselor educators teaching in master's degree programs in school counseling was identified and a survey was sent to each participant. One-hundred thirty six surveys were returned (54.4%); this represented 69 CACREP-accredited programs and 67 non-CACREP-accredited programs involving respondents in each region of Association for Counselor Education and Supervision.

The research questions addressed by this study included:

1. How do counselor educators rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree school counseling programs?
2. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the importance of including advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills in master's degree programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?
3. What are counselor educators' perceptions relative to the extent to which advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are taught as part of their institutions' master's degree school counseling program?
4. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the extent that advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills are being taught as part of master's degree school counseling programs higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?
5. How do counselor educators perceive the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates, at the time of degree completion, to apply advocacy competencies?
6. Will counselor educators in CACREP-accredited programs rate the readiness of master's degree school counseling graduates at the time of degree completion to apply advocacy competencies higher than counselor educators in non-CACREP-accredited programs?

Mean ratings for respondents indicated that counselor educators perceived inclusion of the advocacy competencies (dispositions, knowledge, and skills) in master's programs in school counseling as moderately to very important. Also, mean ratings indicated respondents perceived that the advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skill competencies were moderately taught in their programs. In addition, counselor educators perceived their graduates, at the time of degree completion, to be the moderately ready to apply advocacy disposition, knowledge, and skill competencies.

It was hypothesized that participants from CACREP-accredited programs would have higher perception ratings on the 15 advocacy competencies than non-CACREP-accredited participants for importance of including the competencies in the master's degree program, the extent of teaching the competencies in the program, and the readiness of program graduates to apply the competencies. The results showed no statistically significant differences between CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited respondents on the mean ratings.

## **Conclusions**

It can be concluded from these results that the advocacy disposition, knowledge, and skill competencies delineated by Trusty and Brown (2005) are appropriate for inclusion in master's degree programs in school counseling. The results indicate that additional focus on advocacy competencies might be needed within programs to ensure all school counseling graduates learn and are ready to apply the competencies. In addition, one could conclude that the perceptions of counselor educators in CACREP-accredited and non-CACREP-accredited programs are more similar than different relative to the importance of including the competencies in graduate programs, the extent to which they are taught, and the readiness of graduates to apply the competencies.

## **Recommendations for Further Study**

Based on the results of this study, further research is recommended in the following:

1. A follow-up study should be conducted with a redesigned survey to determine if rating variations might exist between component skills within the advocacy competencies. For example, while the communication skills of empathy, listening, and responding represent critical skills for counseling, the communication skills of assertiveness, persuasion, and influence represent crucial skills for advocacy (Dollarhide, 2003; Ezell, 2001; Fiedler, 2000; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Counselor educators may differ in their perceptions of these skills as to the relative importance for including the component skills in the program, the extent to which they are taught in the program, and the extent to which program graduates are able to apply these skills.
2. A study should be conducted to determine the perceptions of program graduates relative to the advocacy competency preparation they received in their program, and their ability to apply advocacy competencies at the time of program completion. This would provide an important comparison to the perceptions of counselor educators as well as add to the knowledge base regarding advocacy preparation.
3. Additional study is warranted regarding the relationship of advocacy disposition competencies to the development and use of advocacy knowledge and skill competencies. The results of such a study could assist school counselor educators in establishing a



program sequence for advocacy preparation experiences, or in making adjustments in program practices.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

Based on the results of this study, the following are recommended for professional practice:

1. In future revisions of the CACREP Accreditation Standards for School Counseling Programs, greater specificity within the standards should be given to the inclusion of the advocacy competencies identified by Trusty and Brown (2005). Based on the consistency of mean ratings among school counselor educators in this study, these competencies would serve as an appropriate framework for addressing the teaching of the advocacy dispositions, knowledge, and skills within master's degree programs in school counseling.
2. In master's degree programs in school counseling, focus should be placed on how to address and enhance the development and implementation of a coordinated, systematic, and comprehensive approach to preparing school counselors for their important role as advocate. Advocacy, for the professional role of the school counselor, comprehensive counseling programs and services for students, and systemic changes in policies, procedures, and practices to respect the rights and meet the needs of students and families has become integral for school counselors (e.g., Field & Baker, 2004).
3. Ongoing self-study should be conducted in master's degree programs in school counseling regarding the use and application of advocacy by program completers after one year and at three years following entry into the field. Focus should be given to identifying the frequency with which advocacy opportunities are encountered by graduates, whether or not advocacy was chosen as an intervention, and the additional preparation in advocacy that would have been helpful for greater success as an advocate. The data received should be incorporated into program (e.g., course structure and methods) decisions to enhance the advocacy competency of school counselors.

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## **Appendix A - Survey**

## A Survey of Advocacy Competency Preparation in School Counseling Master's Degree Programs

Advocacy is a process of identifying unmet needs; making a commitment to change the circumstances of the status quo that contribute to the problem, inequity, or injustice; and taking action in support of the cause or on behalf of those who cannot support themselves. It involves being a risk taker through leadership, collaboration, and systemic change (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005). Advocacy competencies for school counselors include dispositions, knowledge, and skills (Brown & Trusty, 2005; Fiedler, 2000; Trusty & Brown, 2005).

<b>1. Using the 5-point scale, please rate the degree of importance for including the following advocacy competencies in a master's degree program for school counselors. Please circle your response.</b>	Not Important	Moderately Important	Very Important		
<b>Advocacy disposition</b> - accepting a professional advocacy role (autonomous thinking/behavior, altruistic motivation, willingness to risk for others)	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Family support/empowerment disposition</b> - empathy and advocacy with parents for their children	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Social advocacy disposition</b> - eliminating social inequities/barriers affecting all people and for the school counseling profession	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Ethical disposition</b> - applying ethical principles, codes, and laws to advocacy	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Knowledge of resources</b> - mobilizing people, programs, institutions, agencies, and community groups for advocacy	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Knowledge of parameters</b> - school policies/procedures, legal rights of students/families, scope of school counselor professional practice in the context of advocacy	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms</b> - conflict resolution strategies and mediation processes	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Knowledge of advocacy models</b>	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Knowledge of systems change</b> - school and societal systems and subsystems to facilitate change	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Communication skills</b> - listening, empathy, and skills to educate, influence, and persuade others	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Collaboration skills</b> - openness and diplomacy for building and maintaining relationships	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Problem-assessment skills</b> - problem cause, reasons compelling advocacy, and judgment	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Problem-solving skills</b> - applying theoretical models to advocacy decisions, goals, and planning; empowerment; and resource coordination	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Organizational skills</b> - planning, information gathering, using data, taking action, and follow up of action in managing the advocacy process	1	2	3	4	5
<b>Self-care skills</b> - coping skills and supportive relationships to maintain and replenish energy, handle unsuccessful advocacy attempts, and avoid burnout	1	2	3	4	5

2. Using the 5-point scale, please identify the extent to which you believe the competencies are currently taught in your master's degree program in school counseling. Please circle your response.	Not Taught	Moderately Taught		Fully Taught
Advocacy disposition - accepting a professional advocacy role (autonomous thinking/behavior, altruistic motivation, willingness to risk for others)	1	2	3	4 5
Family support/empowerment disposition - empathy and advocacy with parents for their children	1	2	3	4 5
Social advocacy disposition - eliminating social inequities/barriers affecting all people and for the school counseling profession	1	2	3	4 5
Ethical disposition - applying ethical principles, codes, and laws to advocacy	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of resources - mobilizing people, programs, institutions, agencies, and community groups for advocacy	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of parameters - school policies/procedures, legal rights of students/families, scope of school counselor professional practice in the context of advocacy	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms - conflict resolution strategies and mediation processes	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of advocacy models	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of systems change - school and societal systems and subsystems to facilitate change	1	2	3	4 5
Communication skills - listening, empathy, and skills to educate, influence, and persuade others	1	2	3	4 5
Collaboration skills - openness and diplomacy for building and maintaining relationships	1	2	3	4 5
Problem-assessment skills - problem cause, reasons compelling advocacy, and judgment	1	2	3	4 5
Problem-solving skills - applying theoretical models to advocacy decisions, goals, and planning; empowerment; and resource coordination	1	2	3	4 5
Organizational skills - planning, information gathering, using data, taking action, and follow up of action in managing the advocacy process	1	2	3	4 5
Self-care skills - coping skills and supportive relationships to maintain and replenish energy, handle unsuccessful advocacy attempts, and avoid burnout	1	2	3	4 5

3. Using the 5-point scale, please rate the extent to which your master's degree program completers, at the time of graduation, are ready to apply the advocacy competencies. Please circle your response.	Not Ready	Moderately Ready		Completely Ready
Advocacy disposition - accepting a professional advocacy role (autonomous thinking/behavior, altruistic motivation, willingness to risk for others)	1	2	3	4 5
Family support/empowerment disposition - empathy and advocacy with parents for their children	1	2	3	4 5
Social advocacy disposition - eliminating social inequities/barriers affecting all people and for the school counseling profession	1	2	3	4 5
Ethical disposition - applying ethical principles, codes, and laws to advocacy	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of resources - mobilizing people, programs, institutions, agencies, and community groups for advocacy	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of parameters - school policies/procedures, legal rights of students/families, scope of school counselor professional practice in the context of advocacy	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of dispute resolution mechanisms - conflict resolution strategies and mediation processes	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of advocacy models	1	2	3	4 5
Knowledge of systems change - school and societal systems and subsystems to facilitate change	1	2	3	4 5
Communication skills - listening, empathy, and skills to educate, influence, and persuade others	1	2	3	4 5
Collaboration skills - openness and diplomacy for building and maintaining relationships	1	2	3	4 5
Problem-assessment skills - problem cause, reasons compelling advocacy, and judgment	1	2	3	4 5
Problem-solving skills - applying theoretical models to advocacy decisions, goals, and planning; empowerment; and resource coordination	1	2	3	4 5
Organizational skills - planning, information gathering, using data, taking action, and follow up of action in managing the advocacy process	1	2	3	4 5
Self-care skills - coping skills and supportive relationships to maintain and replenish energy, handle unsuccessful advocacy attempts, and avoid burnout	1	2	3	4 5

4. Are advocacy dispositions considered in the admissions process for your master's degree program in school counseling?  Yes  No If Yes, how are the dispositions considered?

5. Where are advocacy competencies (dispositions, knowledge, and skills) taught as part of your master's degree program in school counseling?

a) Are they taught primarily in a single course?  Yes  No  
 If Yes, please list the course title and circle whether this is a required or an elective course.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Required or Elective

b) Are they taught in several courses?  Yes  No  
 If Yes, please list the course titles and indicate whether each course is a required or an elective course.  

Course Title	Please Circle
_____	Required or Elective
_____	Required or Elective
_____	Required or Elective
_____	Required or Elective
_____	Required or Elective

6. For each of the categories (dispositions, knowledge, and skills), what methods are used in your master's degree program in school counseling to enhance advocacy competencies? Please check all that apply.

	Advocacy Dispositions	Advocacy Knowledge	Advocacy Skills
Required text or readings	_____	_____	_____
Class discussions/assignments	_____	_____	_____
Role play scenarios/experiential activities	_____	_____	_____
Competency assessment with feedback	_____	_____	_____
Other (Please specify):			
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

7. Your title in the school counseling program:

School Counseling Program Coordinator  Department Head or Chairperson  Other (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

8. Your university setting is best described as:  Urban  Suburban  Rural

9. Number of credit hours required for a master's degree in school counseling:  Semester Hours or  Quarter Hours

10. Number of students admitted to your school counseling master's program annually: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Number of faculty teaching in your school counseling master's program: \_\_\_\_\_ Full Time  Part-Time

12. Please share other thoughts, ideas, or issues regarding the preparation of school counselors for advocacy.

Thank you for taking your time to complete this survey. Your assistance in providing this information is greatly appreciated.

## **Appendix B - Permission to Use Advocacy Competencies**



At 04:15 PM 5/14/2006, you wrote:

Dear Dr. Trusty,

I am a doctoral candidate at Kansas State University and my advisor is Dr. Ken Hughey. I have been very interested in advocacy for some time and had begun work on my dissertation at the time your article on Advocacy Competencies for Professional School Counselors was published in *Professional School Counseling*. I found the model you presented to be especially significant in moving the field toward the advocacy role. With the hope of increasing the knowledge base regarding advocacy competencies, my dissertation proposes to study the perceptions of counselor educators regarding the development of advocacy competencies during Master's degree programs in school counseling. The survey that I have developed involves the use of the 15 disposition, knowledge, and skill competencies that you have identified. I would like to talk with you about permission to use these for my survey.

Robert,

You have my permission to use the advocacy competencies for your survey. Sounds like an interesting dissertation. I will definitely want to know what you found--how to access your dissertation when you are finished.

Although last week my doctoral committee approved continuation with the study, they have suggested several adjustments to the survey. I can send you a current copy before revisions, so that you can see how they would be used in the survey. When would be a good time talk with you about this? Dr. Hughey gave me a contact number for you (814-863-7536), unless there is a different one I should use to contact you.

This is my office number. Through the rest of May and most of June, Tuesdays and Thursdays, in the early afternoons (1 to 3 EDT), is the best time to call. We can set this up via email if we need to talk.

You can send me an attachment of your survey when you are ready.

Best, Jerry Trusty

Please let me know, and thank you for your consideration.

Robert Kircher

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<http://www.ed.psu.edu/cned/Trusty/homepage.asp>

## **Appendix C - Notice and Solicitation Letter**

Date

Name

Title

Address

Dear:

Advocacy continues to evolve as an important role for school counselors and yet little research has been conducted regarding the preparation of school counselors with respect to advocacy competencies. Counselor educators serving as school counseling program coordinators from institutions throughout the United States are being asked to participate in a study regarding preparation for advocacy.

Approximately one week from today, we will be sending you a survey designed to assess the perceptions of counselor educators regarding advocacy competencies and how they are addressed during the master's degree program in school counseling. It is anticipated the results will be used to develop recommendations regarding advocacy preparation of master's degree school counselors.

Your input will be important to the success of this study and we would greatly appreciate your participation.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Kircher  
Doctoral Candidate

Kenneth F. Hughey, PhD  
Professor and Advisor

## **Appendix D - Survey Cover Letter**

Date  
Name  
Title  
Address

Dear:

Advocacy continues to evolve as an important role for school counselors. Little research has been conducted regarding the preparation of school counselors with respect to advocacy competencies. You are among counselor educators across the United States serving as school counseling program coordinators being asked to participate in a doctoral dissertation study conducted at Kansas State University regarding advocacy competency development in school counseling master's degree programs. The enclosed survey is designed to assess perceptions of counselor educators regarding advocacy competencies and identify the present status of advocacy competency development occurring in master's degree programs in school counseling. It is anticipated the results will be used to develop recommendations regarding advocacy preparation of master's degree school counselors.

We would like to request your involvement in this research study. We anticipate that it will take approximately 15 minutes of your time to complete the enclosed survey. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. Your responses will be maintained in the strictest confidence and none of the results from this survey will reflect upon you or your institution. Your return of the completed survey will signify your informed consent to participate in this study.

We have assigned a tracking number and placed it on the enclosed survey in order to identify your institution for follow-up contacts. The returned envelope will be separated from your survey upon receipt, and after the code number is recorded, the number will be removed from the survey to maintain anonymity. All results will be reported as a group to provide anonymity. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects.

Please complete the enclosed survey and return it in the enclosed, stamped, addressed envelope. If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail Robert Kircher at kircher@sunflower.com or call 785-841-5251 and leave a message. Should you have any questions about the rights of participants in this study or the manner in which it is conducted, you may contact Dr. Rick Scheidt, Chair of the IRB Committee at Kansas State University, at 785-532-3224.

Your input will be important to the success of this study and we would greatly appreciate your assistance and participation. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results, please send an e-mail request to Robert Kircher at kircher@sunflower.com.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Kircher  
Doctoral Candidate

Kenneth F. Hughey, PhD  
Professor and Advisor

Enclosures

## **Appendix E - Thank You and Reminder Postcard**

Last week you should have received a survey seeking your input regarding advocacy competency development in master's degree school counseling programs. School counseling program coordinators from throughout the United States are being asked to participate in this doctoral dissertation study. If you have already completed and returned the survey, please accept our thanks.

If you have not yet returned the survey, we request that you complete it and return it soon. We would really appreciate your assistance and again ask for your participation in this study. Through your help, we hope to identify the perceptions of counselor educators regarding advocacy competencies and how they are addressed in master's degree programs in school counseling. If you did not receive the survey, please e-mail us at [kircher@sunflower.com](mailto:kircher@sunflower.com) or call and leave a message at 785-841-5251, and another survey will be mailed. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Kircher, Doctoral Candidate  
Kenneth F. Hughey, PhD, Professor and Advisor  
Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology  
Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506

## **Appendix F - Follow-Up Letter**



Date

Name  
Title  
Address

Dear:

Advocacy continues to evolve as an important role for school counselors. Little research has been conducted regarding the preparation of school counselors with respect to advocacy competencies. Hopefully, you have previously received a letter from us requesting your involvement in a doctoral dissertation study being conducted at Kansas State University regarding advocacy competency development in school counseling master's degree programs. You are among counselor educators across the United States serving as school counseling program coordinators being asked to participate in this study. The enclosed survey is designed to assess perceptions of counselor educators regarding advocacy competencies and identify the present status of advocacy competency development occurring in master's degree programs in school counseling. It is anticipated the results will be used to develop recommendations regarding advocacy preparation of master's degree school counselors.

We would again like to request your involvement in this research study. We anticipate that it will take approximately 15 minutes of your time to complete the enclosed survey. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may terminate participation at any time without consequence. Your responses will be maintained in the strictest confidence and none of the results from this survey will reflect upon you or your institution. Your return of the completed survey will signify your informed consent to participate in this study.

We have assigned a tracking number and placed it on the enclosed survey in order to identify your institution for follow-up contacts. The returned envelope will be separated from your survey upon receipt, and after the code number is recorded, the number will be removed from the survey to maintain anonymity. All results will be reported as a group to provide anonymity. This research project has been reviewed and approved by the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board for Research Involving Human Subjects.

Please complete the enclosed survey and return it in the enclosed, stamped, addressed envelope. If you have any questions, please feel free to e-mail Robert Kircher at kircher@sunflower.com or call 785-841-5251 and leave a message. Should you have any questions about the rights of participants in this study or the manner in which it is conducted, you may contact Dr. Rick Scheidt, Chair of the IRB Committee at Kansas State University, at 785-532-3224.

Your input will be important to the success of this study and we would greatly appreciate your assistance and participation. If you are interested in receiving a copy of the results, please send an e-mail request to Robert Kircher at kircher@sunflower.com.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Kircher  
Doctoral Candidate

Kenneth F. Hughey, PhD  
Professor and Advisor

Enclosures

## **Appendix G - Final E-mail Message**

Dear Dr.

In the past few weeks, you should have received a survey seeking your input regarding the development of advocacy competencies in master's degree school counseling programs. If you have already completed and returned the survey, please accept this as our thanks.

If you have not yet returned the survey, we request that you complete it and return it soon. We would really appreciate your assistance and again ask for your institution's participation in this study. Through your help, we hope to identify the perceptions of counselor educators regarding advocacy competencies and how they are addressed during master's degree programs in school counseling.

If you did not receive the survey, please send a return e-mail to us at [kircher@sunflower.com](mailto:kircher@sunflower.com) or you may call and leave a message at 785-841-5251 and another survey will be mailed. Likewise, if you believe another member of your department would be better able to respond to the survey questions, please assist us by either forwarding it to them or sending a return e-mail to us identifying the name of that person for us to contact.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Kircher, Doctoral Candidate  
Kenneth F. Hughey, PhD, Professor and Advisor  
Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology  
Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506