



GRADUATE PROGRAM
IN COUNSELING

Program Outcomes Report for 2022-2023 Academic Year

Mission

Our mission, as a Christ-centered program, is to educate invested and caring individuals who will serve in a variety of settings as counselors characterized by integrity, humility, skillfulness, and understanding. We desire that these professionals will be leaders who facilitate healing, growth, reconciliation and spiritual well-being for diverse people.

I. Program Updates

The 22-23 academic year was one of both stability and growth. Our admissions continue to be strong, though students entering the Clinical Mental Health track have become the significant majority. We are also seeing high numbers of CMH students entering into the field experience phase of our program, perhaps because of higher admissions in certain years. We successfully integrated the Supervision Assist software program into our field experience courses and onboarding process. There were certainly issues to work out along the way, as with anything new, but overall the feedback has been positive from students, faculty, and site supervisors. We ran our first section of the Spiritually Integrated Psychotherapy course which was full and our hope is to find ways to make it accessible to even more students and practicing professionals. We began a collaboration with The Bridge, which is Messiah's professional continuing education center and hope we can determine what professionals in our broader community would need in terms of development.

One significant initiative that we undertook this year was welcoming transfer counseling students from Missio Seminary (Philadelphia) and Alliance University (formerly Nyack College) when those schools announced they were closing. We are honored that these students entrusted us with the rest of their counseling training as they processed these sudden changes. The department staff, enrollment department, field experience staff, and faculty all pulled together to get these students settled in.

Our faculty continue to be active in writing and presenting at a variety of conferences and contributing to professional organizations as exhibited in the following selected scholarship:

Duncan, T.M. (2023). Entry: Assessment of racial microaggressions. *Encyclopedia of Multicultural Counseling, Social Justice, and Advocacy*. Sage.

Cook Sandifer, M. I., Gibson, E. M., & **Brant-Rajahn, S. N.** (2022, September). Anti-racist andragogy in school counselor education and training. *Dialogues in Social Justice: An Adult Education Journal*.

Gibson, E.M., **Brant-Rajahn, S.N.**, Cook Sandifer, M.I., (2022, July 8-12). *Train Transformational School Counselor Leaders* [Conference Session]. American School Counselor Association Conference, Austin, TX, United States.

Georgieva, M. (2022) *Addressing Religious and Spiritual Themes in Counseling: Assessment, Intervention, and Ethical Considerations*. Maryland Association for Spiritual, Ethical, and Religious Issues in Counseling. Webinar.

Georgieva, M. (2023) *Healing and Community through Bread Therapy*. American Counseling Association Conference, Virtual.

Mouffet, K. (February, 2023). *Facilitating resilience in graduate counseling students learning how to integrate theory*. Educational session at the International Association of Marriage, Couple and Family Counselors, St. Petersburg, FL.

DePalmer, S., & Livick, A. (Fall 2022). *Restorative practice in school counseling*. Pennsylvania School Counseling Association Annual Conference, Lancaster, PA.

McGinnis, C.Z.A. (2023) Helping students manage anger. *Professional School Counseling: A handbook of theories, programs, and practices 4e*. [Erford, B.T. ed]. Cognella Publishing.

McGinnis C. (2022). Religious and spiritual implications in functional anger. *The Journal of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, 15423050221117765. Advance online publication.

Giovannetti, M., (2023, April). *Digital Dilemmas: Ethical Considerations in Telehealth & Substance Use Disorders*. Pennsylvania Certification Board Conference 2023, Harrisburg PA.

Clarke, L. K. (2022) Ungrading an online counseling course. *Journal of Technology in Counselor Education and Supervision*, 2(2), <https://doi.org/10.22371/tces/0019>

II. Student Data/Vital Statistics

CMHC = Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MA)

SCH = School Counseling (MA)

MCFC = Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling (MA)

CAGS = Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies (not CACREP accredited)

A. Enrollment (End of Academic Year 22-23 Snapshot)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC	TOTAL
200	44	38	282

B. Graduates (December 2022 to August 2023)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC	TOTAL
49	13	15	77

C. Completion Rate* (Master’s students who completed the program)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC
62.4%	81%	76.7%

* 3-year average of completion rates for students who began in 2014, 2015, and 2016 fiscal years

D. National Counselor Exam (NCE) 2022-2023 Academic Year

Historically, students in all three tracks of the Counseling program have taken the National Counselor Exam before graduation.

	Tested	Passed	Pass Rate
Fall 22	29	25	86%
Spring 23	39	32	82%

Pass rates by track: School Counseling 8 of 11 (72%), Marriage Couple and Family Counseling 9 of 10 (90%), and Clinical Mental Health Counseling 40 of 47 (85%)

E. Praxis II

Professional School Counselor exam required of School Counseling students in order to become certified school counselors in Pennsylvania.

During the 2022-2023 academic year, 100% of the students who took the Praxis II exam passed.

F. Job Placement Rate for graduates of Master’s programs 6 or more months after degree completion in counseling positions (based on 2022 Alumni Survey). Excludes those not seeking counseling positions.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling N= 31	School Counseling N=17	Marriage Couple and Family Counseling N=5
100%	100%	100%

III. Demographics

A. Counseling Student by Gender and Ethnicity, snapshot at the end of 2022 academic year (Master's only):

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	
GENDER	
Female	234
Male	48
ETHNIC BACKGROUND	
Asian / Asian-American	8
Black / African-American	36
Hispanic, Latino/a, inc. Spain	26
Multi-Ethnic / 2 or more races	9
White / Non-Hispanic	195

B. Geography: The Counseling Program has students in 32 U.S. states. Pennsylvania has the most students with 160. Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Virginia, Washington, Florida, North Carolina, and Texas have the next most students.

IV. Program Learning Outcomes

Every year the program evaluates student learning outcomes in the areas outlined in our Program Objectives. Each of these objectives is aligned with a Graduate Learning Outcomes (GLO) defined by Messiah University.

Program Objective 1. To provide students with the specific knowledge and skills required of clinical mental health counselors, school counselors, or marriage, couple and family counselors as delineated by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

This year we assessed learning in the core curriculum area of Career Development and Counseling. COUN 528: Career Counseling Across the Lifespan is the main course where this area is covered. Overall, targets were met. One of our learning objectives relates to the use of technology in career counseling. We determined that our curriculum and assignments related to this did not fully address the objective and determined a way we could modify the career professional interview assignment to address. **Action Step: review assignments in COUN 528 for better way to incorporate technology related objective.** Quizzes in the COUN 528 course were also discussed in terms of how they can best be set up to replicate the experience of the National Counseling Exam.

Program Objective #2: To prepare students to understand, evaluate and engage in scholarship related to the field of counseling.

We did not collect much new data related to this objective this year because we assess every 3 years but continue to work on implementing changes from data collected last year. Students do continue to attend conferences and respond to the exit survey. 94% of students said they felt at least moderately knowledgeable about program evaluation. **Action Steps: Faculty will review the new CACREP Standards for 2024 to see which relate to program evaluation and reshape the curriculum as needed. We will still plan to move the assignment earlier in the term and a live course session will focus on it. Students will not create a program but will focus on evaluating an existing program with existing data sets.**

Program Objective #3: Students will demonstrate knowledge of the process and requirements for the credentials (licensure and/or certification) they wish to pursue.

Our review of NCE scores from Fall of 23 did not yield any significant information. Students are generally performing close to the means of students in other CACREP programs in all areas. And they are performing as they usually do for students in our program. Pass rates between 85-95%. The pass rates are lower on for Spring 2023- 82% across the three tracks. The only noticeable deviation from the national mean on the subject areas was the CMH track in the area of Career Counseling. **It is difficult to know what to attribute this to but certainly something to address in our NCE study groups.**

Our discussion around the licensure worksheet revealed that we can change how we are grading these so that they ensure students are completing them in a timely way. 100% of students rated themselves as at least moderately knowledgeable about licensure on the exit survey. Site Supervisors' overall assessment of all internship 2 students yielded that only 1 was rated as developing (below On Target). There were no significant comments of concern related to this rating. **Action steps: Add component to internship courses for students to take a look at licensure before they graduate and adjust grading procedure for 501 licensure worksheet.**

Program Objective #4: To provide the knowledge and skills that enables students to incorporate faith, religion, and spirituality into counseling, and understand how Christian faith connects with the counseling profession.

On the exit survey 97% of students rated themselves as at least moderately knowledgeable about clients & spirituality. For the connection between Christianity and counseling, 89% of student rated themselves as at least moderately knowledgeable. The comments in this section were mostly positive but there is still work to be done for helping students see Christian connections specifically. One idea had been for faculty to work on Christian connection statements that would be on their syllabi or in their classes as a foundation for making those connections. In three of the courses where we are assessing objectives related to this PLO, 97%-96% of students are meeting the target. In the COUN 540 course, the assessment tool we are using is not a very good measure of the objective. We will need to make the directions for students more clear in this area or find another way to assess. **Action steps: review 540 assessment tool for revision and support faculty in making clear connections between Christianity and courses.**

Program Objective #5: To guide students toward an ethical practice of counseling that is grounded in professional and spiritual values.

On the exit survey, 100% of students rated themselves as at least moderately knowledgeable on ethics and on self-care. Internship II site supervisors generally rated students as at least "On Target" for the 5 questions related to ethical behavior. In the three instances they were rated as "developing" on one of the

behaviors, no serious ethical issues were noted in the qualitative comments. All site supervisors rated students as at least "on target" for managing self-care. Students improved on their performance on the ethics essay exams in COUN 501 from January of 23. There were some changes to the texts and the exams so not sure if that is what that can be attributed to, also possible students had more time to focus on them after the intensive in the summer than they did in January. Faculty agreed we would keep an eye on these in January of 24. In the other course-based assessments related to ethics students performed well (100%-90% students met targets) and the assessment tools appear to be functioning as desired. In reviewing Critical Competency Evaluations that were written for the year, plagiarism emerged as a significant issue. Faculty had a robust discussion about this on 8/30/23. Agreed that further steps need to be taken to educate students about plagiarism and better use the tools we have available to address issues within the course instead of remediation and ensure they are getting education on APA Style. **Action Steps: create plan to ensure students understand plagiarism, APA Style and guidelines related to AI, and that faculty are appropriately using tools like Turnitin. We will monitor student performance on Essay exams 2 & 3 in January 24 and look for places in curriculum to reinforce ethics and ethical decision making in the curriculum.**

Program Objective #6: To help a diverse student body become self-reflective leaders who understand and address how issues of discrimination, privilege and oppression impact the practice and policies of counseling in a multicultural society.

Data from the exit survey indicates that students feel faculty are sensitive to diversity among students but there is also some missing data from the survey. The admissions and retention committee hopes to lead focus groups of underrepresented students. In the CMH and School tracks, 100% of students were rated by site supervisors as at least on target for all questions related to cultural competence. One MCF student was rated on developing in terms of implementation of culturally relevant practices but no concerning comments. In assignments designated for assessment in the Multicultural course, 97-98% of students met the targets. However in the COUN 501 course, only 69% of students met the target on a specific essay exam question. We need further examination to see why this was. There was robust discussion about how the advocacy project is going and it was agreed it is going well even though different students take the project to different levels of implements. **Action steps: determine errors or where missing data is for exit survey; focus groups for underrepresented students; examine why students are underperforming in COUN 501 in this area.**

Master's Specialty Areas Review and Updates

SCHOOL COUNSELING

1. *Role of the School Counselor* Assignment: The *Role of the SC* assignment will now be exclusively part of COUN 508 and integrated into the School Counselor Website assignment.
2. "Balancing Professional Responsibility" and "Cultivating Professional Relationships": These topics will be embedded into field experience courses and highlighted in the syllabi. Discussions with faculty supervisors occurred on September 7, 2023. Syllabi and Canvas shells will be updated to reflect.
3. Countertransference and Overidentification: These topics will also be incorporated into field experience course discussions and syllabi, as discussed during the supervision of supervision meeting on September 7, 2023. The syllabi and Canvas shells will be updated accordingly.
4. Track Course Audit: Track coordinator completed an audit of COUN 508, COUN 525, and COUN 526, which was reviewed with SC track faculty on September 13, 2023. The audit confirmed that all CACREP Standards are met without overlap, except for one resolved objective. Enhancements to assignments, readings, and other course materials are being considered to

emphasize program objectives. Course stewards will be responsible for implementing these revisions.

5. School Counseling Field Experience Course Changes: To address assessment data, field experience courses will now include:
 - A community resource plan for each new internship site.
 - Discussions on technology tools.
 - An emphasis on professionalism, with a starting score of 100 points for each student, from which points will be deducted for inadequate participation, missed supervision sessions, and unprofessional conduct. These policies will be explicitly outlined in the syllabi and reviewed by faculty supervisors at the beginning of the term.

MARRIAGE, COUPLE, & FAMILY COUNSELING

1. Work toward paring down field experience texts to the most essential.
2. Need for a self-awareness assignment in field experience courses.
3. Areas to focus on in relation to supervisor's evaluation of students: Cultural awareness, recognizing countertransference and avoiding self-disclosure, identifying local resources, ability to assess for substance abuse

CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Field experience course updates/revisions:

1. Case Presentation Assignment. Add a requirement for writing treatment goals.
2. Add the DAP Sample from COUN 540 (Counseling Techniques).
3. Add an assignment or scheduled discussion that requires students to briefly describe their experiences/responsibilities at their site related to a) treatment plan writing, b) progress notes, c) diagnosing, and other documentation.
4. Multicultural forum discussions. They should be adjusted to focus on social determinants of access to medication in a multicultural context.
5. The psychopharmacology exam should be consistent across all sections of COUN 580: CMH Practicum.