

MISSOURI STATE UNIVERSITY

COUNSELING PROGRAM



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Annual Report

Calendar Year 2024

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Master of Science in Counseling

The Master of Science in Counseling Program's 2024 Annual Report

This report contains an overview of the Master of Science in Counseling (MSC) Program, including data from courses, survey data, faculty information, and program data as outlined in the Counseling Assessment Plan (CAP) for the MSC Program. As part of the Program's ongoing comprehensive evaluation efforts, this report includes updates, summary data, findings from the CAP, and program modifications made as a result of these findings and personnel changes.

Getting to Know the MSC Program

MSC Program Summary

The Counseling program grants a Master of Science degree in Counseling with options in School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling, each requiring 60 credit hours of course work for completion. The School Counseling (SC) program is designed to fulfill the professional counseling course requirements for the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DES) K-12 school counseling certification in the State of Missouri. The Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program is designed to fulfill the professional counseling course requirements for licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in the State of Missouri. The LPC designation also requires 3000 hours of additional post-master's supervised experience. To ensure optimal placement potential and the highest quality of education standards, both concentrations are designed to meet the national academic and field placement standards set forth by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program (CACREP) and their latest standards.

MSC Mission Statement

The mission of the Counseling Program is to provide high quality curricular and clinical experiences for graduate students in the counseling profession, leading to eligibility for certification and licensure as professional counselors. We aim to develop competent and ethical counseling practitioners who have a deep level of self-understanding, to work effectively with diverse clients in a variety of settings to facilitate the dignity, well-being, and potential of all people. Students graduate with knowledge and skills in core competency areas that include professional identity, social and cultural foundations, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, research, and program evaluation.

To fulfill this mission, the Counseling Program facilitates a course catalogue designed from the eight core curriculum areas and two specialized application areas of CACREP and DESE. The

curricular objectives are arranged according to these areas and incorporate requirements from the latest CACREP and DESE guidelines. The core areas address both cognitive acquisitions (knowledge) and skill attainment. Experiences are organized to provide introduction, essential practice, and mastery of critical concepts and skills. Below are the objectives designed for the program based on our mission statement and CACREP standards.

- **Knowledge:** Students will demonstrate appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge and comprehension in the areas of culturally relevant service, prevention, treatment, referral, and program management associated with the broader field of counseling as well as the selected specialty (i.e., clinical mental health or school counseling).
- **Clinical Skills:** Students will demonstrate meaningful, therapeutic alliances that utilize culturally sensitive appraisal and assessment techniques for working with individuals and groups in a culturally pluralistic world.
- **Research and Appraisal:** Students will demonstrate analytical knowledge and skills for appraising and contributing to professional counseling literature and program evaluation in selected specialty areas (i.e., clinical mental health or school counseling).
- **Professional Dispositions:** Students will conduct themselves in accordance with the highest ethical standards and values of professional counseling and develop an understanding of oneself and the use of self in the counseling process.
- **Specialty Areas:** Students will demonstrate appropriate breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in their respective specialty areas (i.e., clinical mental health or school counseling).

Program Updates

The 2024 academic year was marked by continued transition and structural development within the Counseling Program. In January, Lauren Hembree was hired half-time as Clinic Director, expanding to a larger percentage appointment in August. During this interim, Dr. Leslie Anderson served as the clinic liaison, providing oversight and continuity until Ms. Hembree assumed the role fully. In August 2024, the Counseling Clinic relocated to the Alumni Building, a significant step in preparing for the program's eventual move into the new multidisciplinary clinic projected for spring of 2026. Both Dr. Anderson (initially) and Ms. Hembree (subsequently) represented the program on the multidisciplinary clinic planning committee, which began its work in late spring 2024.

Leadership transitions also shaped the year. The Practicum/Internship (P/I) Coordinator role shifted again, as Dr. Charlie Myers stepped down and Ms. Lauren Hembree assumed the role in spring 2024. In May, Dr. Bonni Behrend and Ms. Amy Chenoweth were announced as co-coordinators, with official appointments finalized in November. Under the new structure, Ms. Hembree directs practicum oversight, Dr. Behrend directs oversight for School Counseling internships, and Ms. Chenoweth directs Clinical Mental Health Counseling internships.

Faculty growth remained a priority, with a year-long search resulting in the hire of Dr. Bridger Falkenstien in May 2024, who began his appointment in August. In December, the Program Coordinator role transitioned to Dr. Jeffrey Cornelius-White, providing renewed leadership as the program moved into the next stage of its accreditation cycle. In addition, the School Director

position experienced significant changes, with the initial departure of Dr. Paul Deal in June 2024 followed by an official resignation in August. Since that time, Dr. Letitia White-Minnis (Associate Dean) and Dr. Mark Smith (Dean) have served jointly as Acting School Directors. The CACREP Liaison role was also reassigned in November 2024, with the formal transition effective in January 2025 to Dr. Bridger Falkenstien. Staffing resources also continued to fluctuate. Clerical support decreased with the complete departure of Lisa Monkres in October 2024, prompting ongoing efforts to secure more consistent administrative coverage. Graduate assistant positions also shifted, with the loss of one GA in 2024 partially offset by the restoration of 0.5 GA in late 2024 for spring 2025.

Finally, the program continued to evolve its infrastructure for data management and assessment. The transition to Tevera as the primary long-term data system advanced throughout 2024, though integration challenges with BrightSpace and SharePoint persisted. These transitions, coupled with the loss of College of Education infrastructure, created some instability in the DESE matrix, IPS, and assessment processes. Efforts to stabilize and streamline these systems remain ongoing.

Applicant and Enrollment Data

Academic Year 2024

The Counseling Program's application process is able to track students who begin the application process, those who complete the application process, which student applications are denied, or an offer is made for their acceptance. This process allows the program faculty to provide feedback internally to inform admission decisions and adjust admission practices to support applicant wellbeing and faculty cohesion. In 2024, 277 applications were initiated with 111 applications completed and considered for admission (40%). Of these 111 completed applications, 46 applicants received an offer from the program for admission (41%). Received throughout the academic year, students are able to submit their applications for admission for both the Fall and Spring semester. These applicants are then interviewed and considered alongside previously applied students for full admission into the program. In the Spring, there were 30 CMHC and 2 SC students admitted. In the Fall, there were 14 CMHC and 8 SC students admitted. Taken together with the previously applied students, of the 46 applicants from the 2024 cycle who received an offer for admission, 54 students ultimately completed admission and enrollment in the 2024 cycle. Below are the demographics for the 46 new applicants:

Demographic Data for Applicants

Race/Ethnicity						Gender		
Hispanic/ Latino	Multicultural	Black/AA	Native American/ Alaskan Native	AAPI	White	Female	Male	Declined to State
1	1	10	0	7	92	84	25	2

A total of 11 prospective students applied to the MSC program in 2024. The reported ethnicity and gender of the applicant pool was majority White (83%) and Female (76%). The program continues to explore ways to support and enroll underrepresented students, consistent with the

Counseling Assessment Plan (CAP). The applicant pool ethnic diversity included White (83%), Black/African American (9%), Hispanic/Latino (.9%), Multicultural (.9%), and Asian (6%), with 76% identifying as female, 22.5 % as male, and two applicants who declined to state.

Demographic Data for Enrolled Students

Race/Ethnicity						Gender		
Hispanic/Latino	Multicultural	Black/AA	Native American/Alaskan Native	AAPI	White	Female	Male	Declined to State
1	3	9	0	2	39	39	14	1

The total new enrollment for the 2024 academic year was 54 students. Similar to the application data, the majority of enrolled students were White (72%) and female (72%). The enrollment pool ethnic diversity included White (72%), Black/African American (17%), Multicultural (6%) Asian (3.7%), and Hispanic/Latino (11%), with 72% identifying as female, 26% identifying as male, and one enrolled student who declined to state their gender.

Evaluating Program Objectives

The Counseling Assessment Plan (CAP) is an ongoing assessment and evaluation of the program, its practices, and its policies. The CAP details the evaluation process, and guides faculty interpretation for program development and improvement including its inputs, activities, recipients, outcomes, and impacts. Designed to optimize student success, faculty development and wellbeing, and program development, the following data sources contribute to the evaluation:

- Key Performance Indicator Data (evaluating Student Learning Outcomes)
- Exit Survey (for Graduating Students)
- Program Evaluation Survey from Site Supervisors
- Alumni Data
- Employer Placement Data
- Site Visit Feedback (Practicum and Internship)
- Student Evaluations (Annual and Responsive)
- Comprehensive Test Scores (CECE and NCE)

Designed to facilitate student development, *Student Learning Outcomes* (SLOs) have been created to guide curricular activities and course design in adherence with the latest CACREP and DESE standards. SLOs are measured through survey and observation as well as an individual student's performance in a course with a designated *Key Performance Indicator* (KPI) that links student performance and development to the program's intended SLOs and the program objectives for evaluation. Presented below is a table reflecting the SLOs and their linked KPIs and measurement points.

Student Performance Evaluation		
Student Learning Outcome (SLO)	Key Performance Indicator	Measurements
SLO1. Students will understand and adhere to ethical standards of professional counseling organizations	Students will understand and apply the ethical standards of professional counseling organizations	Ethical Decision-Making Model, CECE Comprehensive Examination
SLO2. Students will attain multicultural counseling competencies and skills for creating therapeutic relationships with diverse clientele	Students will recall and model multicultural counseling competencies in all aspects of their counseling work.	Diversity Foundations Collection, CECE Comprehensive Exam
SLO3. Students will be able to determine the unique needs of individuals at all developmental levels and select relevant prevention and treatment strategies for addressing those needs.	Students will recall and apply theories of individual and family development for creating differentiated interventions.	Human Growth Conceptualization Paper, CECE Comprehensive Examination
SLO4. Students will understand career development and make use of career theories, assessments, and career resources.	Students will understand and use theories of career development to assist with career development, planning, and counseling.	College & Career Autobiography, CECE Comprehensive Exam
SLO5. Students will understand and apply counseling theory, skills, and interventions for enhancing the counseling relationship.	Students will recall and demonstrate knowledge of counseling theories, techniques, and skills to establish and maintain effective counseling relationships.	Counseling Skills section of the Performance Fitness Evaluation (PFE) in Helping Relationships and Lab, Practicum, and Internship, CECE Comprehensive Exam.

SLO6. Students will be able to identify the process of group development and facilitate therapeutic or psychoeducational groups.	Students will understand and demonstrate group work including theories, group dynamics and techniques, and skills necessary to effectively facilitate group counseling.	Group Manual Assignment, CECE Comprehensive Exam
SLO7. Students will know how to ethically utilize group and individual assessment applicable to either school counseling or mental health counseling.	Students will recognize and demonstrate the ability to use assessment results to assist clients and/or students.	Diagnostic Evaluation Report, CECE Comprehensive Exam
SLO8. Students will be able to apply the evidentiary hierarchy for appraising research and selecting evidence-based practices.	Students will identify and evaluate research to inform effective counseling practices.	Seminar Paper or Thesis, CECE Comprehensive Exam.
SLO9. Students will demonstrate professional dispositions relevant to professional counseling.	Students will demonstrate personal and interpersonal processes as well as professional dispositions inherent in becoming an effective, reflective counseling practitioner.	Professional Dispositions and Social-Emotional Maturity & Integrity and Ethical Standards PDME section of the Performance Fitness Evaluation (PFE)
School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Specialty Areas		
School Counseling Specialty Students will be able to identify and evaluate an ethical comprehensive school program.	Students will understand and demonstrate utilization of an ethical comprehensive school counseling program, including the application of the ACA and ASCA codes of ethics.	School Counselor Interview, MSCE Summative Data: Site Supervisor, MSCE Summative Data: University Supervisor.
Clinical Mental Health Students will be able to develop a culturally relevant,	Students will conceptualize and apply an ethical counseling approach for working effectively with	Case Conceptualization Presentation (CCP), Ethical Decision-Making Model

ethical treatment plan.	clientele from diverse backgrounds.	(EDMM)
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Presented below is a summary of the program objects and the information used to evaluate them over the academic year.

Program Objective 1. Knowledge

This objective is measured using SLO 2-4, and 6, and their associated KPIs. These KPIs are evaluated by program faculty using a 1-3 scale where 1 = Inadequate, 2 = Proficient, and 3 = Exceptional. Additionally, several subscales of the Counselor Education Comprehensive Exam (CECE) are devoted to this Program Objective. Presented below is a review of how students scored on each SLO and a report on the relevant subscales of the CECE.

SLO2

To evaluate this outcome, students complete the ***Key Performance Indicator (KPI): Diversity Foundations Collection*** in their early coursework. This portfolio-based assessment invites students to reflect deeply on their own cultural identities, explore systemic issues related to oppression and privilege, and develop a personal philosophy of culturally responsive counseling. In 2024, the scoring distribution for this KPI revealed that 95% ($N = 83$) of students received at least a Proficient rating, and 4.5% ($N = 5$) received an Inadequate rating.

SLO3

Evaluation of this outcome is based on the students' completion of the ***KPI: Human Growth Conceptualization Paper***, where they apply developmental theories to real or hypothetical clinical cases. This assignment allows students to demonstrate their ability to think critically about how age, life stage, and family dynamics inform treatment planning and prevention strategies. In 2024, the scoring distribution for this KPI revealed that 100% ($N = 58$) of students received at least a Proficient rating, and 74% ($N = 43$) received an Exceptional rating.

SLO4

This outcome is evaluated through the ***KPI: College & Career Autobiography***, a reflective assignment that asks them to trace their own educational and vocational development using the career theories they're learning. This project fosters a personal connection to the material, allowing students to integrate theory with lived experience – an essential step in being able to offer meaningful career guidance to others. In 2024, the scoring distribution for this KPI revealed that 100% ($N = 59$) of students received an Exceptional rating.

SLO6

To ensure both conceptual knowledge and practical application, students are evaluated using two key performance indicators, First, students complete a ***KPI: Group Manual Assignment***, which

requires them to design a comprehensive group counseling experience. This assignment serves as a capstone to their didactic learning and allows for thoughtful integration of both clinical and logistical considerations. Second, students are observed and evaluated during their actual **KPI: Group Facilitation** experiences, wherein they co-lead a counseling or psychoeducational group and are rated on core group leadership competencies. In 2024, the scoring distribution for the first KPI revealed that 59% ($N = 22$) of students received an Exceptional rating, and 40.5% ($N = 15$) received a Proficient rating. The scoring distribution for the second KPI revealed that 58% ($N = 24$) of students received an Exceptional rating, and 41% ($N = 17$) received a Proficient rating.

Summary

Results for Program Objective 1: Knowledge reflects a strong integration of academic knowledge, self-reflection, and applied clinical skills. Students consistently demonstrated Proficient to Exceptional performance across all KPIs, indicating readiness to serve diverse communities with insight and professionalism. These results affirm both the strength of the curriculum and our ongoing commitment to preparing thoughtful, well-informed counselors.

Program Objective 2. Clinical Skills

This objective is measured using SLO 5. Students are evaluated on this SLO at three different points throughout the program, giving them time to demonstrate their skills, receive detailed feedback from their program faculty and supervisors, and implement that feedback. The measure used to evaluate this SLO is the Performance Fitness Evaluation (PFE) which is comprised of three domains: A) Professional Dispositions and Social Emotional Maturity, B) Integrity and Ethical Standards, and C) Counseling Skills. These domains are comprised of several questions, each using a 4-point Likert Scale where 1 = Below Expectation, 2 = Needs Improvement, 3 = Meets Expectation, and 4 = Exceeds Expectation. In order to evaluate this Program Objective, Section C of the PFE is summated to create an average score for each student at different measurement points including in Helping Skills (COU 710/711), Counseling Practicum (COU 777), and Counseling Internship which is specific to the specialty area of the student (Clinical Mental Health or School Counseling). Below is a summary of Section C for Helping Skills and Practicum.

Helping Skills (COU 710/711)

In 2024, the scoring distribution for Section C of the PFE in Helping Skills revealed an average score of 3.01 ($N = 45$), Meets Expectations. Upon further inquiry, 15 students scored below Meets Expectations and of these students, only two scored below 2.7 indicating several areas of skill development needed improvement. For some of these students, additional recommendations were made for ongoing development, and several were required to retake the course in a subsequent semester. Additionally, 11 students scored above 3.1, indicating several areas of skill development were exceptionally strong for these students.

Counseling Practicum (COU 777)

In 2024, the scoring distribution for Section C of the PFE in Counseling Practicum revealed an average score of 3.9 ($N = 30$). No student received a score below “Meets Expectations” on any question in the domain, and 27 students had an average score higher than 3.9, indicating several areas of skill development were exceptionally strong for these students.

Summary

These data illustrate a clear developmental progression in students’ counseling skills, with most demonstrating strong proficiency and many reaching levels of exceptional competency by the time they enter clinical fieldwork. The Performance Fitness Evaluation offers a robust and relationally grounded framework for assessing students’ growth across multiple domains, and the consistent improvement between helping skills and Practicum suggests that students are integrating feedback and deepening their therapeutic presence overtime.

Program Objective 3. *Research and Appraisal*

This objective is measured using SLO 7 and 8 and their associated KPIs. These KPIs are evaluated by program faculty using a 1-3 scale where 1 = Inadequate, 2 = Proficient, and 3 = Exceptional. It is important to note, the classes where these SLOs are facilitated are on a two-year cycle, making data collection rich in some years and sparse in others. SLO 7 is measured in COU 724 Assessment and Diagnosis and COU 701 Assessment and Testing for Counselors. Below is a summary of the KPI’s for COU 724 and 701.

Assessment and Diagnosis (COU 724)

In 2024, the average score on the Diagnostic Evaluation Report KPI was 2.7, *Proficient* ($N = 10$). No student fell below proficient on this KPI in this Academic Year, meaning each student was able to synthesize client symptoms and history to provide a diagnosis and adequately engage in differential diagnosis processing.

Assessment and Testing for Counselors (COU 701)

In 2024, the average score on the Test, Administration, Results & Feedback was 2.19, *Proficient* ($N = 32$). No student fell below Proficient on this KPI in this Academic Year, meaning each student was able to interpret and synthesize test results and provide feedback and recommendations in their practice.

Introduction to Research and Program Evaluation in Counseling

In 2024, the average score the Research Proposal KPI was 2, *Proficient* ($N = 22$). Additionally, the average score on the Research Subscale of the CECE was 2, *Proficient* ($N = 4$). While the data is limited, these results indicate an adequate grasp of research methods, ethics, and dissemination practices.

Summary

These data indicate that students are consistently meeting program expectations in the domains of assessment, diagnosis, testing, and research. In both COU 724 and COU 701, all students achieved a level of proficiency or higher, demonstrating reliable competence in synthesizing client history and symptomatology, engaging in differential diagnosis, and interpreting, administering, and providing feedback on assessments. In addition, performance in COU 794 and on the CECE Research Subscale shows that students are achieving proficiency in core research competencies, including developing research proposals, applying ethical standards, and engaging with evidence-based practices. While research-related data remain somewhat limited, the results nonetheless reflect a stable foundation in research and program evaluation skills. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that students are progressing toward advanced competence in integrating diagnostic reasoning, assessment practices, and research literacy, with the expectation that continued improvements in data collection will further clarify their developmental trajectory in future years.

Program Objective 4. *Professional Dispositions*

This objective is measured alongside Program Objective 2 at three different points throughout the program using the Performance Fitness Evaluation (PFE). This Program Objective focuses on domain A of the PFE, Professional Dispositions and Social Emotional Maturity.

Helping Skills (COU710/711)

In 2024, the scoring distribution for Section A of the PFE in Helping Skills revealed an average score of 3.2 ($N = 29$), *Meets Expectations*. Upon further inquiry, 4 students scored below Meets Expectations and of these four students, three scored below 2.7 indicating several areas of skill development need improvement. For some of these students, additional recommendations were made for ongoing development, and several were required to retake the course in a subsequent semester. Additionally, fifteen students scored above 3.1, indicating several areas of skill development were exceptionally strong for these students.

Counseling Practicum (COU 777)

In 2024, the scoring distribution for Section A of the PFE in Counseling Practicum revealed an average score of 3.91 ($N = 30$). No student received a score below “Meets Expectations” on any question in the domain, and 27 of the 30 students had an average score higher than 3.7, indicating several areas of skill development were exceptionally strong for these students.

Summary

These data illustrate a clear developmental progression in students’ professional dispositions and social-emotional maturity. While a small number of students in Helping Skills fell below “Meets Expectations,” most demonstrated strong growth, and several required targeted remediation that

was successfully implemented. By the time students reached Practicum, nearly all were consistently demonstrating dispositions well above the expectation level, with the vast majority scoring higher than 3.7. This upward trend underscores that students are effectively internalizing feedback, strengthening their self-awareness, and embodying the professional and relational qualities essential to the counseling profession. The Performance Fitness Evaluation continues to serve as a robust framework for assessing dispositional growth, and the significant improvement between Helping Skills and Practicum indicates that students are cultivating the maturity and ethical grounding necessary for advanced clinical training.

Program Objective 5. Specialty Areas

This objective is measured through two unique learning outcomes optimized for the school counseling and clinical mental health counseling tracks. Each SLO is measured throughout the program at various points. School Counseling students are evaluated on this SLO in COU 704 Introduction to School Counseling, COU 781 Secondary school Counseling, and COU 783 Elementary School Counseling. Clinical Mental Health Counseling students are evaluated on this SLO in COU 703 Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice in School and Mental Health Counseling, and COU 785 Mental Health Counseling Internship. Below is a summary for each specialty area and the student level data for each KPI.

School Counseling

In COU 704 Introduction to School Counseling, the average score on the KPI was 3, *Exceptional* ($N = 12$). An Exceptional performance on this KPI is reserved for students who are able to provide a detailed explanation of a comprehensive school counseling program and display exceptional use of graphs, and logic model in describing model. For School Counseling students who completed the ***KPI: Case Conceptualization Presentation***, the average score was 3, *Exceptional*. For students assessed using the Missouri School Counselor Candidate Assessment, the average score by their site supervisors was 3.10, *Meets Expectations* ($N = 22$). Upon further review, only two students scored below 3.0 when rated by their site supervisors; in these cases, additional recommendations were made, and a remediation plan was implemented to assist the students in their ongoing development. When rated by their faculty supervisor, the average score for students was 3.5, *Meets Expectation* ($N = 17$). Of these 17 students, only two scored below 3.0 when rated by their site supervisors; in these cases, additional recommendations were made, and a remediation plan was implemented to assist the students in their ongoing development. Additionally, In COU 781 and COU 783, the internship classes for school counseling students, the MSCE is used to evaluate student development. The average score for students assessed using this KPI in 2024 was 3, *Exceptional*.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling

For Clinical Mental Health Counseling students, this objective is measured in COU 703 Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice in School and Mental Health Counseling using the ***KPI: Ethical Dilemma Exploration Paper***. The average score for students assessed using this KPI in 2024 was 2.73, *Proficient* ($N = 55$). In COU 785 Mental Health Counseling Internship, a

Case Conceptualization Presentation is used to assess student development. For Clinical Mental Health Counseling students in 2024, the average score on this KPI was 2.97, *Proficient*.

Summary

These data reflect strong specialty-area development across both the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling tracks. School Counseling students consistently performed at the *Exceptional* level in their early coursework (COU 704) and on the Case Conceptualization Presentation, demonstrating advanced ability to conceptualize and articulate comprehensive school counseling programs. While site supervisor ratings on the Missouri School Counselor Candidate Assessment averaged in the *Meets Expectations* range, faculty supervisor ratings were notably higher, and remediation plans were implemented promptly for the small number of students who fell below expectations. By the time students reached their internship experiences in COU 781 and COU 783, average performance again reached the *Exceptional* level, underscoring clear developmental progression across the sequence.

Clinical Mental Health Counseling students likewise demonstrated reliable competency, with average scores in the *Proficient* range on both the Ethical Dilemma Exploration Paper (COU 703) and the Case Conceptualization Presentation during internship (COU 785). These results indicate that CMHC students are effectively meeting expectations in applying ethical reasoning and clinical conceptualization skills, with average scores approaching the *Exceptional* benchmark by the conclusion of their training.

Taken together, these outcomes suggest that students in both specialty areas are meeting or exceeding program expectations, with School Counseling students showing particularly strong growth across multiple assessment points and CMHC students demonstrating steady proficiency with upward trajectory toward advanced competency.

National Counseling Exam

Through our commitment to preparing competent and credential-ready counseling professionals, we closely monitor student performance on national licensure and certification examinations. These exams serve as a critical benchmark for assessing students' readiness to enter the field and uphold the standards of the Counseling Profession.

Each year, a subset of graduating students sits for the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or other qualifying exams required for state licensure or national certification. The results of these exams provide valuable feedback about the alignment between our curriculum and the broader competencies expected of entry-level counselors. Presented below are the exam pass rates of the number of students who completed the national counseling exam during the 2024 academic year.

Six students registered for the NCE in 2024 and 5 passed, reflecting an 83% pass rate for the counseling program in 2024.

In 2024, an exit survey was not conducted for graduating students due to faculty transition and role diffusion. However, 2024 included a progress report to our program accreditation organization, the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). For this progress report, a Special Report was created and subsequently used for program evaluation and modification. The survey used to create this Special Report invited feedback from community partners, current students, alumni, and faculty using both rating scales and open-ended questions. Respondents evaluated the program across six areas: knowledge, clinical skills, research and appraisal, professionalism and ethics, specialty area preparation, and the overall mission. The subsequent report evaluated this mixed-methods survey strategy for program feedback and faculty recommendations.

Quantitative Results

Overall, the program was rated positively, especially in terms of student professionalism, ethical conduct, and readiness to work with clients. Community partners gave the program strong ratings across all areas (overall average = 4.05/5.0), with particularly high confidence in students' professionalism and ethics (4.57/5.0). Alumni also reported high averages (overall = 3.80/5.0), emphasizing strengths in professionalism (4.20/5.0). Faculty ratings were uniformly very high across all areas (overall = 4.50/5.0). Current students gave more moderate ratings (overall = 3.40/5.0), affirming growth in professionalism (3.71/5.0) but identifying lower confidence in preparation for their specialty areas (3.21/5.0).

Qualitative Feedback

Narrative feedback added important context. Stakeholders consistently praised the program for preparing students who are ethical, reflective, and relationally strong. Alumni and community partners noted that students are well-prepared and compare favorably with peers from other institutions. At the same time, current students and alumni highlighted areas for growth, including stronger specialty-specific training (e.g., trauma, telehealth, school counseling techniques), clearer and more consistent communication, and greater alignment between the program's mission and students' day-to-day experiences.

Summary

This special report affirms that the program is respected in the community and continues to prepare graduates who are recognized for their professionalism, empathy, and ethical commitment. At the same time, stakeholder feedback pointed to opportunities for improvement in several areas. In terms of communication, respondents described a desire for clearer, more consistent messaging about course sequencing, advising expectations, and program updates—suggesting that a centralized communication system and term-based announcements could improve clarity and cohesion across cohorts. Relatedly, feedback on instructional consistency emphasized the importance of ensuring alignment in course delivery, expectations, and grading across sections and instructors. Faculty discussions are now focusing on strengthening onboarding and mentoring for per-course faculty, as well as exploring ways to increase transparency about curricular decisions and expectations with students.

Finally, the call for more specialty-specific training highlighted student interest in applied areas

such as trauma-informed care, telehealth, and school counseling techniques. In response, faculty are considering strategies such as compiling and sharing a vetted list of professional development opportunities each term, reopening clinic-based workshops for both students and site supervisors, and issuing a call for elective course proposals that expand offerings in these focus areas. Together, these efforts aim to enhance communication, instructional quality, and training relevance while maintaining the program's longstanding strengths in professionalism and care.