



Messiah College Graduate Program in Counseling

Program Outcomes Report for 2018-2019 Academic Year

I. Introduction

The Messiah College Graduate Counseling Program continues to grow and to demonstrate positive outcomes for students and graduates.

The program has 9 full time faculty and numerous long term adjunct faculty. The program has a full time administrative assistant, two part-time assistants, and a practicum/internship coordinator. The program will welcome new School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling faculty members in the Fall of 2020.

All three Master's tracks offered: Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, and Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling are accredited by CACREP through 2020. The department has shifted its curriculum to the 2016 CACREP Standards and will be welcoming a CACREP site visit team in the Spring of 2020 as part of the re-accreditation process.

II. 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.

III. Student Data

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 (Spring 2019 Snapshot)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC	TOTAL
123	61	51	235

B. Graduates (August 2018 to May 2019)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC	TOTAL
32	20	13	65

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

CMHC	SCH	MCFC
35 of 52 (67%)	13 of 20 (65%)	17 of 23 (74%)

* Snapshot of students who began in 12-13 academic year

D. National Counselor Exam (NCE) 2018-2019 Academic Year

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

	Tested	Passed	Pass Rate	Messiah Mean Score	National Mean Score
Fall 18	25	22	88%	111.88	104.87
Spring 19	25	23	92%	105.95	104.87

Pass rates by track: School Counseling (12/12), Marriage Couple and Family Counseling (8/8), and Clinical Mental Health Counseling (25/30)

Praxis II

1. Professional School Counselor exam required of School Counseling students in order to become certified school counselors in Pennsylvania.
2. During the 2018-2019 academic year, 100% of the students who took the Praxis II exam passed.

E. Job Placement Rate for students 6 or more months after graduation in Counseling related positions (based on 2019 Alumni Survey)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC
14 alumni respondents	9 alumni respondents	5 alumni survey respondents
93% (13/14 alumni)	78% (7/9 alumni)	100% (5/5 alumni)

IV. Demographics

A. Counseling Student by Gender and Ethnicity for 18-19 Academic Year (Master's and CAGS):

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	
GENDER	
Female	283
Male	51
ETHNIC BACKGROUND	
Asian / Asian-American	5
Black / African-American	38
Hispanic, Latino/a, inc. Spain	24
Multi-Ethnic / 2 or more races	10
White / Non-Hispanic	253

B. Geography: The Counseling Program has students in 38 states in addition to Morocco, Guatemala, Cayman Island and Ireland. Pennsylvania has the most students with 184. Maryland, New Jersey, Florida and New York have the next most students.

V. 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 College.

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).

In the 17-18 academic year, the program assessed learning outcomes related to this objective in the area of Group Counseling. Across all three semesters of 17-18, at least 93% of students achieved the targets set for these objectives. The faculty reviewed these results and were overall satisfied with the outcome. **Two areas of improvement that are being implemented in the 18-19 academic year. One is improving the instructions for the Group Development Plan project along with providing example of the project in the Group Counseling Course. Additionally, questions related to group counseling skills will be added to the Site Supervisor Evaluation Form to assess those skills in Field Experiences.**

For the 18-19 academic year, the program assessed learning outcomes related to this objective in the area of Human Growth and Development. Due to delays in the utilization of our new assessment software, the faculty was not able to review data on the three objectives in this area until November of 2019. Results showed that only 83% of students were getting a B or better on

the Developmental Issues in Counseling Paper, a key assignment. The faculty concluded that this could be due to the fact that a large part of this paper is a literature review, yet students often take this course in their first semester, and often before they take the Research course. Using the whole paper to assess understanding of human development may not be appropriate if a large part of the grade is based on their writing and research skills. **Action points related to this are modifying assessment so that the whole paper is not the assessment tool, but rather a line on the grading rubric. In addition, there is an overall need to help students gain research and library skills earlier in the program.** This area also encompasses student understanding of wellness and how to promote it. Data showed that the wellness component of the Digital Storytelling assignment in the Lifespan course was not clear enough, **but will be clarified moving forward.** The wellness component in the Group Counseling course was also not being assessed directly enough, **using a line in the rubric would also be helpful here.** On three of the targets, at least 96% of students met the target, including the targets related to the objective that students will understand the effects of disasters and trauma on human development.

Learning objectives related to the three program tracks also fall under this Program Objective. The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program was set to be evaluated in 18-19. Data collection is ongoing and the track will be reviewed in the Spring.

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

In 17-18, this objective was assessed mainly in the Research Design course. Students performed well on the Program Evaluation Project but struggled with the qualitative and quantitative journal article critiques. The course steward took a number of steps to clarify the rubric used to grade the assignment as well as giving students more opportunities to engage with the feedback on the first critique so improvement would be seen on the second critique.

In 18-19, this area was assessed with additional data points. Students continued to do well on the Program Evaluation Project. They also did well on two new assignments focusing on the ethics of research and on multicultural considerations in research. Unfortunately, they did not show improvement on the article critiques with about 81% getting a B or better on both critiques. The modifications to this assignment may not have happened soon enough to help all students so this **will continue to be monitored.** 92% of students got a B or better cumulative across the quizzes in this course. These quizzes are closely aligned with the stats and research questions on the NCE. Although this number is good, the faculty gave course steward some ideas for making quizzes for meaningful. **One possibility was having students create a new quiz out of the questions they missed on all the other quizzes.** On the student exit survey, 90% of new graduates rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable or above for both research design/statistics and program evaluation.

3. To prepare students to meet the educational requirements for state licensure as a licensed professional counselor (LPC) or as a licensed marriage and family therapist (LMFT), or for certification as an elementary and secondary school counselor.

In 17-18, students continued to have some difficulty with the Licensure Worksheet in the Professional Orientation class (501). To remedy this, students are now given the opportunity to modify with faculty feedback until we feel it is accurate. No other action points were identified

in this area other than making sure that all faculty had a close eye on when a student was evaluated below satisfactory (overall) at a field experience site.

In 18-19, 94% of students did get an A or better on the Licensure Worksheet which seems to indicate changes to the assignment were helpful. Nine-six percent of them also rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable or higher about professional licensure on the exit survey.

All students were rated on final evaluations as overall satisfactory or above by site supervisors in Internship II or Secondary Internship (for school counselors).

In terms of national standardized exams, 100% of school counseling students continue to pass the Praxis II. For the NCE, pass rates were 100% for the school and marriage, couple, and family counseling tracks but 83% (25/30) for the clinical mental health counseling track. Reviewing the breakdown of these scores by content area does not reveal any obvious deficiencies and most of the areas are above the national average for CACREP programs. Neither can any trends be noted across years in terms of content areas that are weaker. The counseling program surveyed students on their motivations for taking the NCE and this did not reveal anything that would indicate motivation is a problem in the CMHC track. No action points have been identified.

This objective is now also measured by feedback on our alumni survey which was again administered in 2019. The previous administration was in 2016. Part of the alumni survey is to get information about graduate employment and achievement of licensure/certification. The response rate to the alumni survey was unfortunately not very high. Seven of 9 school counseling alumni were employed in counseling positions. The remaining two were employed otherwise while they looked for an appropriate counseling role. This is not surprising in this track as school counseling positions are not plentiful in Pennsylvania where most of our students in this track reside. Five out of 5 marriage couple and family track alumni were employed in counseling settings. Finally, 13 out of 14 clinical mental health students were employed in counseling settings or settings where they used counseling skills, the remaining one was employed but not seeking a counseling role. In terms of certification and licensure, 9/10 school counseling alumni had achieved school counselor certification or LPC status. For the CMHC track, 11/14 were pursuing or had achieved counseling licensure. For the MCF track, 2 were pursuing or achieved the LPC, 1 was pursuing the LMFT, and the final two were not pursuing a license because it was unneeded for their work.

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.

There were no action points from 17-18 in this area, and it was not assessed in 18-19. It will be assessed again in 19-20

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

There were no action points from this area in 17-18. In 18-19, 100% of students achieved a B or better on the Ethics Quiz in the Professional Orientation course. And notably, 100% of students rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable or higher on the exit survey in the area of ethical and legal guidelines. Also positive, 99% of Internship II/Secondary Internship students were

rated as “On Target” or “Excellent” on all ethics related questions in the Final Site Supervisor evaluation.

Also in the Professional Orientation course, 85% of students got a B or better on the essay exam question that asks them to apply an ethical decision making model. This is not as high of a percent as we would like. Also, we were not able to access data for other places this competency is being evaluated. Once we get more data in 19-20 we can look at this again.

During 18-19, 20 students were noted as having issues on the Critical Competency Evaluations in the area of Interpersonal and Professional Competence. Many of these issues relate to willingness or ability to accept and apply feedback. **A discussion on feedback will be added to the Professional Orientation course.**

An objective related to student commitment to self-care also falls under this program objective. 97% of students were rated as “On Target” or “Excellent” by field experience site supervisors who were asked about students’ commitment to self-care. In the exit survey, 100% of students rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable or higher on the topic of self-care

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.

One of the goals in this area is for the program to recruit, retain and graduate a diverse student body. In terms of gender, 18% of students are male, a gender imbalance which is fairly typical in the profession at the Master’s level. In 17-18, 21% of students were non-white. This increased to 23% for 18-19. Unfortunately CACREP is no longer publishing demographic to which we can compare ourselves. The last time they did publish it, 33% of students in CACREP programs nationally were non-white. One area we have been focusing on is retention of students, particularly any trends in the demographics of students we do or do not retain. In the past we have looked at completion rate but these numbers are not very meaningful if you sort them out by race because the numbers are small. We are working with the enrollment and institutional research offices to look at this data in different ways. One bright spot is that 100% of students responding to the exit survey “Agreed” or “Strongly Agreed” that faculty were sensitive to student diversity.

In 17-18, the learning outcomes related to this area were assessed using the cultural autobiography assignment the Multicultural course and the advocacy project in field experiences. It was determined that additional assessment points should be added, particularly the immersion experience assignment. In the Marriage, Couple, and Family track students struggled with the advocacy project more than in other tracks. The track coordinator looked into these issues and made adjustment to the assignment.

In 18-19 the assessment of the learning outcomes took place via the exit survey and in three courses: Professional Orientation, Multicultural Issues, and Field Experiences. In the exit survey, 100% of students agreed they were knowledgeable about social and cultural diversity. In Professional Orientation, 3-5 students per section did struggle to answer a question about multicultural competence on an essay exam. This may be understandable given this is often a first course students take. This is why it is important for students to be assessed on this knowledge at other times in the program. Across 4 key assignments in the Multicultural course

including the immersion project, 92% of students got a B or better. In Internship II/Secondary Internship, 99% of students were rated by site supervisors as “on target” or above on all questions in the cultural competence section of the final evaluation. Also in field experiences, students showed improvement with 100% of School Counseling students, 97% of CMHC students, and 89% of MCFC students getting a B or better. MCFC continues to be the lowest scores on this assignment. It is also the only track that does the assignment in Practicum vs. one of the Internships. **Discussion will continue about moving this assignment to Internship for MCFC students.**

Alumni Survey:

Other than the Alumni Survey results linked to learning outcomes discussed above, specific need and action steps related to the three tracks have been identified.

CMHC:

- The track coordinator will continue to organize “Track Talk” events to foster faculty-student relationships
- Increase spiritual integration in coursework/program
- Explore providing additional play therapy content in some form (continuing education)

School Counseling:

- The need to learn more about writing 504 plans has come up in other areas (exit survey) as well. The instructor for COUN 551, Effective Practices for Every Learner, will add 504 Plans as an option in an assignment.
- It was noted that none of the respondents listed spiritual growth as one of the top areas in which they were most impacted during their time in the program. The school counseling track can do better to have students reflect on their spiritual worldview as it applies to their future school counseling work. They could grow in their ability to recognize these personal and professional pieces of themselves and how they can reconcile these pieces in ways of feeling, thinking, and doing. To be discussed with other track faculty.

MCFC:

- Counseling 530 has a new presentation covering Parenting and Psychoeducation. It has information on parenting styles and some resources for parents and counselors working with children
- Dropped Bitter text and now using Gladding (2018) throughout several of the MCFC courses
- 587 (Practicum) has been modified to reduce some of the work that could have been construed as “busywork”, while leaving the essential work that is beneficial at this stage of clinical development
- In COUN 531 updating presentation to cover material on infidelity

Employer Survey:

For the first time the Graduate Counseling Program sent out an Employer Survey in the Fall of 2019. The purpose of this survey was to gather data on perceptions of graduates as well as needs in the field. The survey was sent to any employer contacts provided by students filling out the alumni survey. We also sent the Employer Survey to current and former site supervisors knowing that many of them had hired graduates. Unfortunately some site supervisors filled out the survey even though they only had current students in field experiences, not alumni employees. So taken with a grain of salt, highlights of the survey are as follows.

What employers said they want in a counseling hire:

