



GRADUATE PROGRAM
IN COUNSELING

Program Outcomes Report for 2019-2020 Academic Year

I. Program Updates

Despite a challenging year, the Messiah *University* Graduate Program in Counseling continues to grow and demonstrate positive outcomes for students and graduates.

- The program saw some turn over in its faculty with year with 4 new faculty being welcomed in Fall 2020. Marcelle Giovannetti, Stephanie DePalmer, Sarah Brant-Rajahn, and Andrea' Burden will be joining us, to bring us to 10 full-time faculty. The university and counseling program will benefit greatly from the gifts these new educators bring. Their bios can be found [here](#). We are also thankful to excellent new and long-time adjunct faculty as well as three departmental staff members who are essential to keeping our program strong.
- In August 2020 we received word that we had been granted 8 more years of accreditation by CACREP for our Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, and Marriage, Couple, and Family Counseling Master's specialty areas (tracks). This achievement was the culmination of many years work by a whole team of people- including many of you, our stake holders.
- Although our program is mostly online, we were still significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The University moved in-person instruction completely online and all of us began working remotely. Students had internship/practicum sites close or move to online services in the middle of the Spring semester. Amazingly, no students had to postpone their graduation. Our students, site supervisors, faculty and staff were resilient and flexible. Many of us are now trained in tele- mental health care which seems like a valuable asset moving forward. Our July intensive courses were converted to a completely online format and delivered successfully. We continue to work remotely this Fall and are still seeing field experience opportunities impacted. The coming months will determine decisions about January intensives.

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/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 (Spring 2020 Snapshot)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC	TOTAL
122	56	56	234

B. Graduates (August 2019 to May 2020)

CMHC	SCH	MCFC	TOTAL
41	14	12	67

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

CMHC	SCH	MCFC
24 of 42 (57%)	17 of 23 (74%)	12 of 18 (67%)

* Snapshot of students who began in 13-14 academic year

D. National Counselor Exam (NCE) 2019-2020 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 19	19	18	95%	116.38	108.43
Spring 20*					

Pass rates by track: School Counseling 3 of 4 (75%), Marriage Couple and Family Counseling 3 of 3 (100%), and Clinical Mental Health Counseling 12 of 12 (100%)

*Spring 2020 exam results have not yet been published by NBCC due to Covid-19

E. Praxis II

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

During the 2019-2020 academic year, 100% of the students who took the Praxis II exam passed.

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

CMHC 14 alumni survey respondents	SCH 9 alumni survey respondents	MCFC 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 19-20 Academic year (Master's only):

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	
GENDER	
Female	252
Male	45
ETHNIC BACKGROUND	
Asian / Asian-American	5
Black / African-American	23
Hispanic, Latino/a, inc. Spain	25
Multi-Ethnic / 2 or more races	9
White / Non-Hispanic	232
Unknown	3

B. Geography: The Counseling Program has students in 37 states in addition to District of Columbia, and the Pacific district of the Military. Pennsylvania has the most students with 203. Maryland, New Jersey, Texas 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 University.

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).

Changes made from 18-19 academic year assessment: In the Lifespan course (COUN 510), the Developmental Issues in Counseling paper was modified so that students understanding of developmental theory will be assessed separately from their research skills. Also in that course, the Digital Storytelling assignment was modified to further assess understanding of developmental theory and to make sure lifespan wellness is addressed in the assignment to meet a different objective. Also, the Group Development project in the Group Counseling course is being modified to more clearly address a counselor's role in promoting wellness.

For 19-20, the areas of learning related to this objective that were evaluated included Career and Counseling/Helping Relationships. For Career Counseling and Development, students' knowledge was assessed on their performance in forum discussions, quizzes, and papers. Students performed well on the forums and papers, with almost 100% rated as meeting levels of competence. Percent of students reaching competence levels on the quizzes was lower, however not to a concerning level. Students' scores on the Career section of the National Counseling Exam have been consistently higher than the average of students in CACREP programs, including in Fall 2019 which would lead to the conclusion that students are learning this material. Action points for this area relate more to improving our assessment. Some of the assessment instruments are assessing other objectives along with the ones that relate to career development knowledge. To remedy this the following changes will be made: Objective 1 (career theory): a rubric will be added to forum Discussion #1 with a line on the rubric about theory application; the Movie Review assignment will be added as a data point with instructions and a rubric line added about application of theory. Objective 2 (career assessment instruments): Discussion #3 will be removed as a data point because it does not relate closely enough to objective, the professional interview assignment will be added with additional requirements about addressing career instruments/assessments. Objective 3 (career/technology): the professional interview paper directions will also specify that technology should be a part of interview and the rubric for the paper will be enhanced to better assess objectives 2 and 3. When our assessment is better aligned with the specific learning objectives we believe we will have more useful data to guide changes in instruction.

The helping/counseling relationships area has 14 objectives in it, a reflection of how crucial this area of learning is. Helping skills can be difficult to measure because they require more subjective assessment by faculty/supervisors and have components of both knowledge and skill. In terms of knowledge, the students performed well on the NCE in the area of Helping Relationships, which is the category with the most questions on the exam. Messiah students scored better than the national average on this section as a whole although in the School track that was not the case in Fall '19. This could be attributed to small sample size (4) and the possibility of an outlier score ($SD=10$). On the exit survey, students rated their own knowledge on this area as high. Knowledge of helping theories specifically is evaluated in COUN 520/Theories in a series of three quizzes. **Eighty-seven percent of students had an average score of a B or better across all three quizzes. The data reveals that if a student did poorly**

on the first quiz, they often continued to do poorly on the other two quizzes. An action point for this is to have instructors intervene with students who do poorly on the first theories quiz and create strategies for improvement.

The majority of assessment instruments related to this objective are used to assess counseling skills. The three key instruments are rubrics for the counseling skills videos in COUN 501, 520, and 540. At the end of each of these courses students submit a video that demonstrates their skills and a rubric is used to evaluate them. A different rubric is used for each video, which is perhaps developmentally appropriate but also makes it harder to see growth across the three assessment points given that the courses must be taken in order. In 501 and 540 which are intensive course formats, students are almost always meeting the skills targets for the video submissions. One area we did not meet our target is in the “basic listening skills” are of the rubric for the 540 video. **This area does encompass a lot of skills so perhaps it is expected that not all students perform well on all of them. Instructors also indicated that standards for students are high for these particular skills because this is the third class where students are practicing them and so are expected to do them proficiently. The target was also set high (18/20), where 17/20 might be a more reasonable aim.** For the 520 video submissions there were some data collection issues with the rubrics. These have now been remedied. There were also data collection issues with one of the assignments in 540 which will be addressed. Because the data collection was incomplete, we will plan to assess these objectives again in 20-21 instead of waiting until 21-22 academic year. Students were also assessed on their skills in their field experience courses. The final site supervisor evaluations of students in their final (or Secondary level for School Counseling) internship were used as assessment instruments. In the “Counseling Relationship” section of the evaluation which includes 5 questions, all students except 2 (97%), received “On Target” or “Excellent” ratings for all 5 questions on the evaluation. This is an impressive achievement as it includes ratings of 76 students across all 3 tracks. For the counseling interventions section of the evaluation, the percent of students who were “on target” or above for all questions was also high, 96% (73/76). Overall it appears that students are doing well with their helping/counseling skills and relationships but a more full assessment is needed.

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 on the Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling program was gathered in 19-20. Because of personnel changed the full assessment process has not been completed for the tracks. The aforementioned tracks will be evaluated in Spring 2021 and the School Counseling program will make plans for evaluation in 21-22.

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

This objective was not evaluated in 19-20, but work continues to apply what was learned from 18-19 evaluation. Student quiz scores have maintained a similar range. It appears that if a student gets two low scores (below 8/10) their average score across all quizzes is also likely to be low. Like in the Career Counseling course, faculty will now intervene with students when they have two low quiz scores. For the article critique assignments, it appears that scores are much

improved and that if student did poorly on first critique, they almost always improved on the second critique. This may be attributed to the improved rubric and an opportunity for students to help each other with these assignments after the first critique but before the second. Faculty will also provide additional information about paraphrasing vs. plagiarizing so that scores are not negatively affected by students failing to paraphrase properly.

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 terms of knowledge about licensure, student scores on the licensure worksheet have been steadily climbing since 17-18 and in 19-20 reached 100% scoring above a B. However, student ratings of their knowledge about licensure on the exit survey have dipped from 96% feeling at least “moderately knowledgeable” to only 87% feeling that way in 19-20. This dip appears to have happened only in the School and Clinical Mental Health counseling tracks which is surprising because licensure in the Marriage, Couple, and Family track is usually more complicated. It could be that because MCF students have more hurdles with licensure they are talking more about it with their instructors and advisor. To that end, advisors in the School and Clinical Mental Health tracks will be advised to bring up licensure as student approach their last year of enrollment in the program. Internship Supervisors will also add this to the list of topics to be discussed in Group Supervision.

In 18-19, 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 19-20, all but two students met this target. There are not necessarily any take-aways from this data other than reinforcing the need to utilize our Clinical Skills Development plan carefully.

In terms of national standardized exams, in 19-20 100% of school counseling students continued to pass the Praxis II. For the NCE, pass rates from Fall 2019 were 100% for the marriage, couple, and family and clinical mental health tracks but 75% (3/4) for the school counseling track. Most Spring 2020 administrations of the NCE were postponed due to the pandemic. Reviewing the breakdown of the Fall 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 exit survey did reveal that school counseling students’ motivation for taking the NCE was to obtain the Nationally Certified Counselor credential, not seek licensure or meet a program requirement. This may make the exam lower stakes for them.

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.

This area was assessed in 19-20. In the COUN 537: Spiritual Formation class, students generally met the targets. There was no discernable pattern or reason for those who did not meet the targets. Students rated themselves high in this area of knowledge on the exit survey. Targets in

540 (100%) and 541 (all but 1 student) were very close to being met. No action points needed at this time.

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

One action point from 17-18 was to add a lecture on feedback and receptivity to feedback in to the Professional Orientation course. However, with moving this course online for the first time in summer 2020, that was not done. It will be implemented in January 2021, the next time the course is taught.

Like the previous year, in 19-20, 100% of students achieved a B or better on the Ethics Quiz in the Professional Orientation course and 100% of students rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable or higher on the exit survey in the area of ethical and legal guidelines.

Ninety-three percent (71/76) of Internship II/Secondary Internship students were rated as “On Target” or “Excellent” on all ethics related questions in the Final Site Supervisor evaluation. This is a reduction from last year which was 100%. There is some concern here given that ethics are essential part of being a counselor and for most students this is a final evaluation at the end of the program. All three tracks had students that did not meet the target on one evaluation item or more. However, there were no “unsatisfactory” ratings, only “developing” which is below the Target. There were no instances where every question on this section of the evaluation was rated below Satisfactory. Given the lack of a pattern in this year’s, it may be helpful to look at this data longitudinally going forward as it is assessed every year.

In the Professional Orientation course, 95% of students got a B or better on the essay exam question that asks them to apply an ethical decision making model. This was an increase from 85% last year. Given that this is the first time students are exposed to ethical decision making, this high percentage seems more than acceptable. Students also apply their knowledge of this area in COUN 537, and 90% met the target. We are continually looking for places for students to demonstrate their knowledge in this area later in the program, perhaps in field experiences but nothing has been implemented to date.

Students’ ability to analyze how values and ethics intersect is evaluated in the “Starting a Practice” assignment in COUN 537: Spiritual Formation. One target was achieved and one was not. Faculty had a lengthy discussion about this assignment, feeling that it might best be suited for another course where it can be given more time and attention.

Critical Competencies revealed that again, receptiveness to feedback, was a main area of concern for the Interpersonal Competence and Self-Awareness areas. There is a plan to address this being implemented from the 18-19 assessment plan.

An objective related to student commitment to self-care also falls under this program objective. 95% 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 again rated themselves as moderately knowledgeable or higher on the topic of self-care

4. 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.

Normally the department would review the demographics of students and completion rate to determine the level to which we are recruiting and retaining a diverse student body. Because offices on campus were not running as normal in Spring 2020 we did not get to do this. We will spend time in Spring 2021 reviewing this data. All students completing the exit survey did feel that the faculty respected diverse viewpoints.

In 19-20 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, only 3 students did not meet the target for an essay exam question about multicultural competence. This number is an improvement from last year and seems acceptable given this is often a first course students take. Across 4 key assignments in the Multicultural course at least 90% of students got a B or better. A smaller percentage of students were successful on the immersion project this academic year. This is partly addressed in that if students get less than a B on this assignment they are flagged for the remediation committee and they may have to re-do or successfully complete the assignment again. 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, student scores continued to improve on their scores on the advocacy project. The adjustments made to the assignment in the Marriage, Couple, and Family track appear to have helped given that 100% of students in that track (and the other two tracks) met the target on that assignment.