

Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling



Lewis and Clark College

Graduate School of Education and Counseling

Annual Program Report

Academic Year 2023-24

Prepared by counseling program faculty for program website posting:

https://graduate.lclark.edu/departments/counseling_psychology/mental_health/outcomes/ and distribution to current students, affiliate faculty, alumni, employers, university administrators, and advisory board members.

(1) Introduction

The Professional Mental Health Counseling and Professional Mental Health Counseling with specialization in addictions (PMHC and PMHC-A) are housed in the Department of Counseling, Therapy, and School Psychology. The PMHC program's roots can be traced back to 1972 and was recognized by the state of Oregon as a state accredited program when licensure in the state was first established in 1989. The PMHC-A program was started in 1999. It should be noted that PMHC and PMHC-A are separate programs for administrative purposes but are accredited as a single CACREP program as they share most courses. This is summarized in the table below:

Program	Total Credits Required	Common Credits	Other requirements
MA PMHC	60	52	2 credit Addictions course 6 credit hours electives
MA PMHC-A	62	52	9 credits of addictions courses 1 elective credit

Professional Mental Health Counseling (PMHC & PMHC-A) Mission Statement

The Professional Mental Health Counseling (PMHC) and Professional Mental Health Counseling-Specialization in Addictions (PMHCA) programs prepare highly skilled, ethical, and compassionate mental health professionals grounded in a commitment to social justice. We emphasize the client - counselor relationship, creative and experiential modalities, and a thorough understanding of mental health issues across the lifespan.

The curriculum reflects multiple theoretical perspectives to guide and support students in developing their own theoretical orientation or framework for clinical practice. Our programs create a transformative environment where students emerge with an understanding of personal social locations, power, privilege, and difference within personal, social, institutional, and therapeutic relationships.

Program Objectives

This academic year (starting in Fall 2023) was the start of our new program objectives. The previous program objectives, were sufficient in representing the CACREP knowledge areas, but didn't sufficiently reflect our program's mission around Social Justice and Diversity. Thus, during our annual faculty retreat, we condensed the program objectives to better reflect the program's mission, as well as simplify our previous 9 program objectives, into 3, while still upholding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions, that professional counselors are expected to uphold. The common core curricular experiences include: professional orientation and ethical practice, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, group work, assessment, helping relationships, research and program evaluation, and career development. Our revised program objectives can be seen in the table below:

PMHC & PMHCA Program Objectives
Social Justice & Diversity
Students, as “self as counselor,” develop critical reflexivity through cultivating awareness of their own attitudes, beliefs, values, and worldviews, informed by their social locations. Students advocate with and on behalf of marginalized individuals by developing culturally sustaining clinical practices to alleviate the impact of injustices on client mental health and well-being. Students are knowledgeable, skillful, and aware social change agents who address injustice and create systemic change.
Clinical Skills
Students develop therapeutic communications skills, emphasize the client-counselor relationship, and facilitate and manage the counseling process with individuals, families, and groups. They apply diagnosis and evidence based practice in a collaborative process with clients to plan culturally responsive and sustaining interventions and treatment. They develop an understanding of a range of counseling theories and how to apply them to a wide range of clinical contexts. Students recognize the importance of incorporating a social justice approach that considers the social and systemic contexts to mental health and wellbeing.
Professional Counseling Identity, Knowledge, and Ethical Practice
Students develop a comprehensive understanding of professional counseling, including its history, philosophical foundations, roles, and functions. They also commit to upholding the ethical guidelines set forth by the American Counseling Association. Additionally, students acquire knowledge in the eight common core curricular experiences outlined in CACREP standards, enabling them to apply this knowledge effectively in clinical situations.

(2) Program Evaluation Results

According to the 2023-24 Exit Survey, (N= 34) the PMHC program scored well when students rated the overall quality of their experience in our program, with the majority of responses having us in the “Very Good” (65%) or “Good” (29%) categories. The lowest scored area can be seen in students’ ratings of our advising with 6% rating it poor, 39% rating it fair, 30% rating it good, and 24% rating it very good. Advising has consistently scored the lowest in past exit surveys, but this year’s numbers are significantly higher than last year’s, which is evidence that our attention to better advising practices is working. With

regards to teaching and course evaluations, our expectation is that student teaching evaluations are high. When lower ratings, or student concerns are brought regarding instructors (usually seen in adjuncts, rarely in core faculty), the evaluations are reviewed by the faculty member and/or chair, with program directors working with adjunct faculty on improvements. Program changes are made using a review of Exit Surveys (Students), Alumni Surveys, and Supervisor/Employer Surveys on which respondents are asked to evaluate the program and program objectives. In addition, faculty reviews qualitative feedback from students and student performance to make program changes.

Evaluation of how well we meet our mission and program objectives is data required by CACREP. This year, as in past years, overall ratings are strong, with most alumni reporting that objectives were met or exceeded.

Program Objectives*	2021-22 Percentage Rating Met or Exceed/Mean (scale 1-4)	2022-23 Percentage Rating Met or Exceed/Mean (scale 1-4)	2023-24 Percentage Rating Met or Exceed/Mean (scale 1-4)
Theory and Research to Practice	86%:3.07	88%: 3.06	97%: 3.32
Clinical Skill (Helping Relationships)	84%: 3.07	88%: 3.35	97%: 3.56
Self as Counselor (Reflective Practitioner)	100%: 3.57	100%: 3.53	100%: 3.71
Multicultural Competence	91%: 3.34	94%: 3.35	100%: 3.53
Professional Counseling Identity	91%: 3.23	88%: 3.18	94%: 3.32
Ethical Practice	93%: 3.2	100%: 3.59	100%: 3.5
Social Justice Advocacy and Community Involvement	84%: 3.18	70%: 2.94	97%: 3.32
Research & Assessment	82%: 2.93	91%: 3.09	85%: 3.0

NCE. An additional informal measure of student achievement is the National Counselor Exam (NCE). This is the primary examination that is required for students to become Licensed Professional Counselors in Oregon and most other states. This past spring, we had a 100% pass rate and our students scored *higher* than the national average.

(3) Curriculum Modifications/Program Improvements

Leading up to the Fall of 2023, the faculty of the PMHC and PMHC-A program designed a new way of tracking student progress as well as how to better evaluate our student learning objectives. We identified and designed key assessment rubrics for our core classes and implemented a pre-practicum student review to better determine student readiness to work with clients. These rubrics were designed with feedback from members of the community that included past alum, current licensed supervisors of our students, and senior adjuncts who have worked with our students for several years. With feedback from our community partners, faculty and GSEC staff were able to reformat our Taskstream database and implement these new changes. The summer 2024 semester is the first batch of students to receive the pre-practicum student review with faculty reviewing their progress in the key assessments.

Additionally, the review of students' progress through the program has transitioned from an informal to a formal basis, with time devoted to our twice-monthly meetings to identify any academic issues reported by faculty and/or staff regarding students. Utilizing the key assessments to now be part of the portfolio review, allowed us to better review student readiness to work with clients, the semester before they start their clinical work (e.g. practicum). In January and February, faculty have a meeting devoted to student review, where we go through each student in the program and discuss their progress and identify any areas of concern. Additionally, there is an evaluation of CECE scores before students start their advanced clinical training (e.g. internship) to ensure that students are meeting benchmark requirements in each of the 8 CACREP common core knowledge areas. If there are concerns about a student's progress, advisers reach out to the student to discuss the issues and implement remediation if appropriate.

We also implemented the Counselor Professional Qualities Evaluation (CPQE), which simplified the Professional Qualities Evaluation (PQE) to 11 dispositions we identified as essential for counselors in training.

(4) Significant Program Changes

One of the most significant changes is the retirement of Dr. Carol Doyle, our esteemed colleague who was a significant part of the PMHC and PMHC-A program for over 20 years. In her place, we hired Dr. Gon Ratanashevorn, who we are excited to work with.

PMHC and PMHC-A students continue to score high marks on standardized tests and can secure a job immediately after graduation for graduates seeking employment. The outlook for professional mental health counselors and addiction counselors continues to remain

high and this prospect will likely remain for several years, as there continues to be a mental health counselor shortage.

(5) PMHC program community engagement activity.

- The advocacy requirement implemented as a portfolio component continues to be a significant community engagement for our students. In addition, students are taking part more in state professional organizations related to counseling (Oregon Counseling Association) and advocacy for client and counselor rights (Coalition of Oregon Professional Associations for Counseling and Therapy).
- The Community Counseling Center continues to be an example of community engagement for both the PMHC and the PMHC/A program. The clinic continues to be a contact point for the PUAH grant, and also began to provide services for people referred from the Returning Veterans project and from the nursing program at Walla Walla University.
- The PMHC program continues to have a strong relationship in the local community through its relationship with over 100 internship sites.

Engagement with professional Organizations

- **Dr. Stella Kerl McClain** served her fifth year on the American Counseling Associations Governing Council. She is an active member of ACA and the Association of Creativity in Counseling, where she also serves as the Governing Council Representative.
- **Dr. Rafe McCullough** is currently a member of ACES, WACES, and ACA, and attends and presents at those conferences annually. He is an Advisory Board member of the Multicultural Issues Subdivision Committee at the International Institute for the Advancement of Counseling Theory.
- **Dr. Jeffrey Christensen** is currently the past-president for the Oregon Association of Counselor Educators and Supervisors (OACES). He is an active member of ACA, ACES, and WACES and provides technical support to the Oregon Counseling Association (ORCA).

Individual Program Faculty Community Engagement

Dr. Jeffrey Christensen volunteers for the American Red Cross as a Disaster Mental Health specialist. He remains involved with Camp Ukandu, where he is a volunteer mental health camp counselor for youth diagnosed with cancer and their siblings. He also helps with fund raising for the camp.

Dr. Carol Doyle cooks quarterly for the Hoyt Street Homeless shelter and recently attended a community workshop on how churches may help asylum seekers as they navigate the asylum process.

Dr. Stella Kerl-McClain provides psychological evaluations for immigrants seeking asylum through a non-profit organization in the community.

(6) Describe new or planned activities, modifications, or initiatives for the next year.

Our new dispositional rubric the CPQE (formally the PQE) was successfully implemented in the fall of 2023 and will continue to be utilized for incoming students. Plans to revise and implement a new practicum/intern student evaluation form is ongoing and will hopefully be implemented in the Spring of 2025.

Program faculty began meeting twice a month starting in the Spring of 2023 throughout the 2023-24 academic year and we will continue to do so in this upcoming academic year to better able to discuss and implement the changes we hope to make. Additionally, time in these meetings are devoted to student academic concerns as well as internship site concerns.

In conclusion, the PMHC and PMHC-A program at Lewis and Clark College is the largest master's level counseling program in the state of Oregon. We are continually regarded as a quality program informed by the positive feedback from counseling internship sites/supervisors and of our graduates from community providers. The rise of telehealth services and the advent of AI chat bots entering the profession, poses some challenges for the counseling profession and counselor educators need to reflect a curriculum and educational process to best meet those challenges. I am proud to say that our current faculty and strategic plan are designed to do just that and that the quality education that we have been able to provide, will continue.