

Lewis & Clark Graduate School of Education and Counseling



Lewis and Clark College

Graduate School of Education and Counseling

Annual Program Report

Academic Year 2024-25

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

Starting in the Fall of 2023, the program condensed the program objectives to better reflect the program's mission, while still retaining the necessary knowledge and skills identified in the CACREP standards. 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 2024-25 Exit Survey, (N= 44) the PMHC program scored well when students rated the overall quality of their education experience in our program, with the majority of responses having us in the “Very Good” (43%) or “Good” (41%) categories. The lowest scored area can be seen in students’ ratings of our advising with 7% rating it poor, 32% rating it fair, 27% rating it good, and 34% rating it very good. This year’s numbers are significantly higher than last year’s, which is evidence that our attention to better advising practices is working. More strategies were discussed to improve this score, which is discussed further in the next section.

This year’s Exit Surveys reflect the prior Program Objectives. The lowest scoring was Research and Assessment, which was also the lowest scoring area in the 2023-24 exit

survey results. The Significant Program Changes section, will provide more details in the program's response to these lower scores.

Program Objectives*	2022-23 Percentage Rating Met or Exceed/Mean (scale 1-4)	2023-24 Percentage Rating Met or Exceed/Mean (scale 1-4)	2024-25 Percentage Rating Met or Exceed/Mean (scale 1-4)
Theory and Research to Practice	88%: 3.06	97%: 3.32	81%: 2.98
Clinical Skill (Helping Relationships)	88%: 3.35	97%: 3.56	90%: 3.42
Self as Counselor (Reflective Practitioner)	100%: 3.53	100%: 3.71	86%: 3.53
Multicultural Competence	94%: 3.35	100%: 3.53	93%: 3.37
Professional Counseling Identity	88%: 3.18	94%: 3.32	90%: 3.33
Ethical Practice	100%: 3.59	100%: 3.5	97%: 3.56
Social Justice Advocacy and Community Involvement	70%: 2.94	97%: 3.32	90%: 3.33
Research & Assessment	91%: 3.09	85%: 3.0	68%: 2.78

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. In the 2024-25 academic year, we had a pass rate of 95% (N=38). These results are pretty typical with past years, and this year our students once again scored higher than the national average in both the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 scoring periods.

(3) Curriculum Modifications/Program Improvements

Advising. At our annual faculty retreat, we discussed the importance of advising and

collectively agreed that supporting students, especially now, with the advent of AI and other world events, was vitally important. Students who were in higher education, during the pandemic, are now more than likely to make up our current graduate students, where more personalized attention, may have not been as possible for academic advisors to provide, due to the demands placed on them. Thus, faculty discussed several strategies, which many of us decided to adopt. These strategies include: 1) Welcome and onboarding emails for first year advisees. 2) A revamp of the first advising session, which focused more on students transition into graduate school and the program. 3) More readily available virtual office hours. 4) The portfolio review to focus not just on Key Assessments, but advisee readiness to see clients. The program has always allowed students to speak to any core faculty for guidance or mentorship and we planned on devoting time in New Student Orientation to speak to this norm, and to normalize that all faculty are ready to serve as advisors when needed.

Research to Practice. While this category reflects an older Program Objective, this area still falls into our current objective of “Professional Counseling Identity, Knowledge, and Ethical Practice” area, as is still recognized as a vitally important part of students education. At our retreat, faculty discussed strategies to improve this area. As part of a larger program change, each faculty member became responsible for specific classes, in which that faculty member would either teach, or help assist adjuncts in the teaching of the course. We standardized the syllabus for the MHC 535 Research Methods course, as well as discussed how other classes like the the diagnosis, mental health assessments, and interventions course, could build on these foundations. These classes already utilized peer-reviewed articles as part of their main assignments, and it was decided to review the research concepts as part of the lecture.

(4) Significant Program Changes

The Lewis and Clark Community Counseling Center (LCCCC) is continuing to expand, with Art Therapy having more of a presence in the clinic. Discussions are underway on how both programs can benefit one another and the community, with some ideas of allowing counseling students a space to do group art as a means of self-care and deeper reflection around the work their doing with clients. In-person counseling continues to happen, with a more clients opting to come in-person than when the clinic first resumed in-person services. Some clients are starting to list a preference for in-person services, which may pose for an interesting research project, that CTSP faculty and the LCCCC may explore. Through tele-health, LCCCC is still able to provide state-wide counseling services to more marginalized communities as well as provide students a beginning clinic experience that will more closely resemble what to expect after graduation (as most community agencies will continue to use a combination of in-person and telehealth platforms to provide services).

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 sixth year on the American Counseling Associations Governing Council and was part of the restructuring of the governance of ACA and writing the new ACA bylaws. She is currently on the ACA Conference Planning Committee charged with ongoing planning for the 2026 ACA National Conference.
- **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 presents at those conferences annually.
- **Dr. Gon Ratanashevorn** is currently a reviewer for the journal of LGBTQ Issues in Counseling, Society for Sexual, Affectional, Intersex, and Gender Expansive Identities (SAIGE) of ACA. He is also a grant reviewer for the Association of Assessment and Research in Counseling and a member of the International Taskforce Association for Assessment and Research in Counseling.

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. Stella Kerl-McClain has ongoing involvement with project organized through Immigration Law Lab to perform forensic assessment of clients who are pleading asylum and participated in the 2025 NW5C Elevating Equity Retreat.

Dr. Gon Ratanashevorn is a committee member of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Employee Resource Group through Lewis and Clark College.

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

The majority of changes to the PMHC and PMHC-A programs for the 2023-24 academic year will be focused on cementing the assessment changes made last year and preparing for our accreditation site visit. Dr. Rafe McCullough's pilot project in providing appropriate work with trans youth at the Lewis and Clark Community Counseling Center was a success, and that will continue. Should the waitlist for that specific modality continue to grow, further discussions will happen to try and expand service accessibility.

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. In addition we have revised and implemented our new practicum and intern student evaluation form since the Spring of 2025 and will continue to monitor its effectiveness in the 2025-26 Academic year.

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.