

Online M.S. Counseling Program
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2024-2025 Annual Report

The Online M.S. Counseling program was implemented in January of 2024. Cohorts are admitted twice per year, in fall and spring terms.

This report presents a summary of our annual program evaluation results, corresponding curriculum and/or program modifications, and any other substantial program changes for our program during the fall, spring, and summer terms of 2024-2025.

Academic Quality Indicators

The academic performance and dispositional development of master's level counseling students are evaluated on an annual basis by program faculty.

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Student outcomes are collected each term, guided by ten KPIs which are aligned to CACREP's eight foundational curricular areas and the entry-level specialization area of Clinical Mental Health Counseling. Each KPI is measured twice and at two different points in time as students matriculate.

During the 2024-2025 academic year, the following KPIs were assessed:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the basic philosophical, historical, and social foundations of contemporary counseling practice, preparation standards, professional credentialing, and legal and ethical tenets (CACREP 2024, Section 3.A, Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice).
2. Demonstrate understanding of the importance of diverse social and cultural experiences of individuals and groups, intersectionality of identities, consequences of social privilege, select and use diversity-affirming counseling approaches and methods (CACREP 2024, Section 3.B, Social & Cultural Identities & Experiences).
3. Describe typical physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development through the lifespan and the impact of atypical development on individuals and families (CACREP 2024, Section 3.C, Lifespan Development).
5. Demonstrate effective use of counseling skills and techniques during counseling and educational sessions; exhibit dispositions and behaviors conducive to building and maintaining therapeutic relationships (CACREP 2024, Section 3.E Counseling Practice & Relationships).
6. Apply theories, models, and interventions as relevant to the practice of group work in a variety of settings (CACREP 2024, Section 3.F, Group Counseling & Groupwork).

7. Articulate the types and uses of assessment in counseling, to include interpretation of results, identification of treatment needs, and planning appropriate services and approaches (CACREP 2024, Section 3.G, Assessment & Diagnostic Processes).
8. Determine the accuracy of information sources, articulate research designs and methods, evaluate and apply data to improve counseling service delivery and program effectiveness (CACREP 2024, Section 3.H, Research & Program Evaluation).
9. Demonstrate working knowledge of history and current priorities of clinical mental health practice, using recognized classifications systems (CACREP 2024, Section 5.C. Clinical Mental Health Counseling, 1-5).
10. Explain delivery of competent counseling services and continuity of care in public and community-based settings in adherence to legal and ethical considerations (CACREP 2024, Section 5.C, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, 6-9).

KPI outcomes data are systematically collected at the conclusion of each term (fall, spring, and summer) in the academic year, using a digitized faculty report form in Microsoft Forms. A minimum of 80% of students are expected to perform at target (80% or B level) on all KPI-aligned assignments and activities. Cohorts 1-3 (N=17) were assessed throughout the 2024-2025 academic year. KPI assessment results for the 2024-2025 academic year are presented here:

2024-2025 KPI Outcomes Data

KPI	Aligned Course Assignments Assessed	N=	KPI Target	%Students Met/ Exceeded Target
1	COUN 531 Ethical, Professional, & Legal Issue	12	80%	91.6%
2	COUN 562 Family Counseling Theories	16	80%	87.5%
3	COUN 563 Human Sexuality & Sexual Dysfun	17	80%	88.2%
5	CMHC 500 Professional Orientation & PrePract	13	80%	92.35
6	CMHC 541 Theories of Personality	13	80%	92%
7	COUN 657 Psychological Assessment & Apprai	14	80%	92.8%
8	COUN 525 Research Methodology & Program	13	80%	100%
9	COUN 659 Psychopathology: Diagnosis & Trea	12	80%	86.6%
10	CMHC 681 Community Counseling	15	80%	93.3%

In the second academic year of the Online M.S. Counseling program, Cohorts 1-3 performed at target or above on all KPIs.

Faculty noted emerging challenges with the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in student work. In response, the program developed and implemented clear AI use policies and instructional supports to ensure that student work authentically reflects learning, counseling competencies, and professional skill development. These policies are now included in program syllabi and admissions materials, with university-wide alignment beginning in Fall 2024.

A small number of students withdrew or did not complete courses during the year. Program faculty have implemented targeted modifications, such as clearer admissions criteria, enhanced faculty-student communication, and proactive advising, to better support student success and program completion.

Dispositional Ratings. Faculty ratings of student dispositional development relevant to effective counseling are collected once annually, in the thirteenth week of each fall term. An 11-item instrument was selected, entitled *Assessment of Clinical Mental Health Counseling Competence* (ACMHCC), Section 4. Professional Dispositions and Behaviors. This instrument is used with permission from its author, Dr. Glenn W. Lambie.

Each fall term, students are rated by their instructors on 11 items (ACMHCC, Section 4):

- a. Professional Ethics. Adheres to the ethical guidelines of the ACA, APA, and/or NBCC; including practices within competencies.
- b. Professional Behaviors. Behaves in a professional manner towards supervisors, peers, and clients (e.g., emotional regulation). Is respectful and appreciative to the culture of colleagues and can effectively collaborate with others
- c. Professional & Personal Boundaries. Maintains appropriate boundaries with supervisors, peers, and clients. Appropriate in-person and social media boundaries are evident.
- d. Knowledge & Adherence to Site & Course Policies. Demonstrates an understanding and appreciation for all counseling site and course policies and procedures.
- e. Recordkeeping & Task Performance. Completes all weekly record keeping & tasks correctly and promptly (e.g., case notes, psychosocial reports, treatment plans, supervisory report.
- f. Multicultural Competence in Counseling Relationships. Demonstrates respect for culture (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, spirituality, religion, sexual orientation, disability, social class, etc.) & awareness of & responsiveness to the intersectionality of culture in all relationship systems.
- g. Motivated to Learn & Grow/Initiative. Demonstrates self-awareness and emotional stability (i.e., congruence between mood & affect) & self-control (i.e., impulse control) in relationships with clients.
- h. Emotional Stability & Self Control. Demonstrates engagement in learning and development of their counseling competencies.
- i. Openness to Feedback. Responds non-defensively and alters behavior in accordance with supervisory and/or instructor feedback.
- j. Flexibility & Adaptability. Demonstrates ability to adapt to changing circumstance, unexpected events, and new situations.
- k. Congruence & Genuineness. Demonstrates ability to be present and “be true to oneself.”

For each student, the above-listed counseling dispositions are rated on a 0-4 point scale as follows:

- 4 = demonstrates competence/exceeds expectations
- 3 = demonstrates competence/meets expectations

- 2 = competence is developing
- 1 = does not meet competence
- 0 = behavioral choices are harmful

Students must obtain a minimum acceptable score of 2 or “competence is developing” on each dispositional item. As they matriculate, students are provided with annual feedback and supports as determined necessary to reach a target score of 3 or “demonstrates competence” on each item.

The ACMHCC instrument was piloted with Cohort 1 during fall 2024 term. Section 4 of the instrument was digitized using Microsoft365 Forms. The ratings form link was distributed to all three (3) full-time faculty by email at the thirteenth week of the fall 2024 term. Aggregate ratings for Cohort 1 are presented here:

Fall 2024 AMCHCC Student Ratings (N=4)

Dispositional Item	Minimum Acceptable	Target Rating	Average Rating by Item	%Students Met Minimum	%Students Met/ Exceeded Target
a	2	3	2.50	75%	25%
b	2	3	3.24	100%	75%
c	2	3	3.41	100%	100%
d	2	3	3.00	100%	75%
e	2	3	2.75	100%	75%
f	2	3	3.08	100%	100%
g	2	3	2.95	100%	75%
h	2	3	3.08	100%	100%
i	2	3	2.70	100%	50%
j	2	3	3.00	75%	75%
k	2	3	3.20	100%	75%

In the 2024-2025 academic year, 75% of Cohort 1 (N=4) met the minimum acceptable rating of 2 or “developing competence” on all 11 dispositional items of the ACMHCC.

Faculty assessed students’ professional dispositions using the ACMHCC and provided constructive feedback to support student growth. When areas for improvement were identified, individualized learning supports, and development plans were implemented to help students meet program expectations.

In order to move students’ scores towards the 3.00 ratings target on all 11 items, the data identified a need for faculty to emphasize professional ethics, recordkeeping and task performance, motivation to learn, and openness to feedback.

Program Modifications

Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Faculty concurred that while student KPI outcomes have met and exceeded the target over the past two academic years, they can be improved. Three program modifications were developed:

- 1) Regularly clarify the appropriate uses of AI to students;

- 2) Develop a policy on AI use and distribute it to students; and,
- 3) Revise program admissions decision processes to include:
 - a) AI checks on applicant's submitted writing samples,
 - b) Accept only applicants who have fully completed and timely packets for interview, and,
 - c) emphasize and clarify computer literacy and program time and workload requirements during applicant interviews.

The Online M.S. Counseling program director led a committee to develop policy on AI use by students at the university level, which was implemented campus-wide in fall 2024. A program-level statement was developed for use on program syllabi and was implemented in summer 2025 term.

Program applicants for Cohort 4 were screened for AI use on their application essays. Essays with more than 40% use of AI were not considered for program admission. This was implemented during application reviews in the summer 2025 term.

Of 17 applications that were started for fall 2025 term, five were fully completed by the deadline and selected for interview. During the interviews in summer 2025 term, faculty members emphasized the computer literacy and the expected time and workload requirements to these applicants. This will be continued during applicant interviews, ongoing.

Dispositional Ratings. The inaugural data indicated a need to ensure that students understand each dispositional expectation on which they are systematically rated. The following program modification was developed:

- 1) Clarify the purpose, process, and expectations relating to dispositional ratings for students on an ongoing basis.

Faculty created a video reviewing the ACMHCC ratings procedure, each dispositional item, and program expectations relating to student performance during spring 2025 term. The video was distributed to Cohorts 1-3 at the start of summer 2025 term. The video will be distributed to new and continuing students each term going forward.

Substantial Program Changes

There are no substantial program changes to report at this time.

Summary

Cohorts 1-3 performed above target on KPIs relating to career counseling and development, counseling theory and skills development, group counseling and groupwork, and substance use and behavioral health. Cohort 1 performed at target on KPIs relating to cultural competence and lifespan development. Cohort 1-3 dispositional development is scheduled for review in fall 2025 term.

As the program's first online cohorts progressed, some students transitioned out of the program due to workload and readiness factors. These early outcomes provided valuable insight that has already informed program improvements in admissions screening, student onboarding, and academic supports. Current practices now emphasize computer literacy, workload expectations, and the appropriate use of technology, and are designed to strengthen retention and persistence going forward.

No program modifications or substantial changes were made during the 2024-2025 academic year 2 of the program.