



CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING ANNUAL PROGRAM EVALUATION REPORT 2025



DECEMBER 1, 2025

Prepared by

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<https://www.southernct.edu/academics/mental-health-sciences>



WHO WE ARE

Mission

The mission of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program at Southern Connecticut State University is to prepare compassionate, skilled, and socially conscious professional counselors. We are committed to fostering personal and professional growth, cultural humility, and a liberation-based approach to counseling. Through rigorous training, experiential learning, and community engagement, we train students to promote mental health, advocate for equity, and serve diverse individuals, families, and communities with integrity and respect.

Program Objectives

At the completion of the CMHC program, students will demonstrate the following:

Objective Area	Learning Outcomes
1. Professional Identity & Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands the multiple professional roles and functions of clinical mental health counselors across settings.• Engages in professional advocacy, promoting the role of counselors in diverse systems.
2. Ethical & Legal Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrates competency in ethical standards and legal considerations set by the American Counseling Association.• Applies ethical decision-making models to complex counseling scenarios.
3. Counselor Identity, Self-Awareness & Cultural Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develops a personalized model of counseling, integrating theories, techniques, and social justice approaches that honor client lived experiences.• Demonstrates self-awareness, emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and commitment to continuous growth.• Engages in ongoing reflection to enhance cultural responsiveness and liberation-focused practice.• Engages in collaborative and decolonized healing practices.

Objective Area	Learning Outcomes
4. Multicultural Competency, Social Justice & Liberation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidences multicultural humility, honoring intersectionality and lived experiences. • Applies culturally responsive counseling theories to support identity development and liberation-focused practice. • Recognizes impact of historical/intergenerational trauma and systemic oppression. • Engages in social justice advocacy to challenge barriers to care.
5. Human Development & Environmental Influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applies lifespan development theories. • Examines systemic and environmental factors influencing development, behavior, and mental health.
6. Career Development & Life Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates knowledge of career development theories and decision-making models. • Utilizes evidence-based strategies for career counseling, program planning, and vocational empowerment.
7. Theoretical & Systemic Foundations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains major counseling theories and integrates a systems-based approach. • Understands consultation, collaboration, and interdisciplinary teamwork strategies.
8. Group Counseling & Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands theoretical foundations of group counseling. • Analyzes group dynamics, process development, and therapeutic factors.
9. Assessment & Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrates assessment tools for diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation. • Applies ethical and culturally relevant strategies for assessment. • Demonstrates competence in DSM/ICD diagnostic processes.
10. Research, Evidence-Based Practice & Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critically evaluates research to inform practice. • Demonstrates competence in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. • Demonstrates evidence-based treatment competency across diverse populations.
11. Trauma-Informed & Healing-Centered Counseling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understands trauma and its impact on mental health.

Objective Area	Learning Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Applies trauma-informed and healing-centered practices that promote safety, empowerment, and resilience.
12. Addiction & Co-Occurring Disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understands etiology, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment of substance use disorders.• Recognizes intersections of addiction, trauma, oppression, and co-occurring disorders.

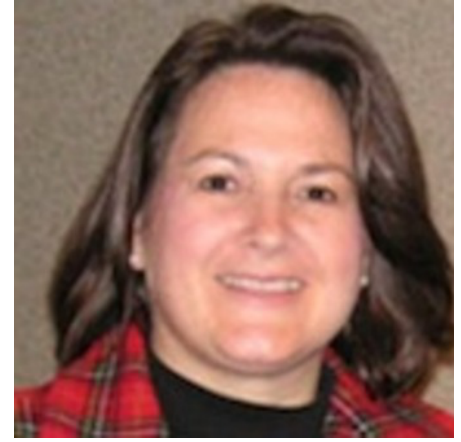
Faculty team



River (Misty) Ginicola, Ph.D.
PROFESSOR & CACREP LIASION



Uchenna Nwachuku, Ph.D.
PROFESSOR, PROGRAM
COORDINATOR, FIELDWORK
COORDINATOR



Cheri Smith, Ph.D.
PROFESSOR & COMPS/NCE
COORDINATOR

Faculty Diversity & Strengths

The CMHC faculty are all full Professors who represent a wide spectrum of lived identities and professional experiences, including differences in race, ethnicity, gender identity, affectional orientation, faith traditions, national origin, socioeconomic background, disability, and neurodivergence. Our collective preparation spans schools, agencies, private practice, and research, and our teaching and service reflect a breadth of expertise in counselor education, multiculturalism, and advocacy.

This diversity of perspectives and training allows us to model for students the value of multiple worldviews, create a faculty culture that honors both individual and collective strengths, and engage in critical dialogue around power, privilege, and oppression. While our backgrounds are varied, we converge on a shared commitment: to prepare liberation-focused, socially just, and culturally sustaining clinical mental health counselors.

Our Accreditation

Our CMHC program is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) and International Registry of Counsellor Education Programs (IRCEP) recognized. This accreditation affirms that our curriculum, faculty, and student support structures meet national standards for counselor education. Beyond compliance, we view CACREP as a framework that supports excellence, accountability, and continuous growth. Accreditation provides external validation of our program's rigor while also holding us accountable to regularly reflect on and improve how we prepare counselors to serve clients and communities with equity, cultural responsiveness, and liberation-centered practice.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of this annual evaluation is to systematically review program outcomes, identify strengths and growth areas, and ensure alignment with CACREP standards and the program mission. This process informs continuous improvement, transparency, and accountability to students, faculty, and stakeholders.

SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THIS YEAR

Introduction

This section documents notable changes to the program, including curriculum revisions, faculty developments, accreditation progress, and program initiatives. These changes are highlighted to show responsiveness to evolving professional standards and student/community needs.

The **Post-Master's Certificate (PMC) bridge program was formally retired** with current PMC students being allowed to complete their programs. This decision was made after careful review by the Advisory Board, consideration of faculty experience, and feedback from students. The faculty determined that focusing exclusively on strengthening and sustaining the MS program would best serve our students, community partners, and long-term accreditation readiness.

As of August 2025, the CMHC program formally separated from the School Counseling program and was reorganized into the **new Department of Mental Health Sciences**.

This transition created space for intentional focus on CMHC, supported by a **Curriculum Development Grant** awarded to the faculty for the 2025-2026 academic year. The grant funded a comprehensive review and revision of the curriculum to align with the 2024 CACREP Standards, prepare for online delivery, integrate findings from past program evaluations, and further embed liberation-focused and social justice principles throughout the program.

In Fall 2025, the CMHC faculty also implemented **new student communication practices**, including messaging the whole faculty team when assistance is needed, weekly program-wide updates and clearer advising guidelines. These changes emphasized collaborative faculty advising, consistent support, and transparent communication about professional boundaries.

Additionally, Dr. River Ginicola piloted the **use of AI learning partners in liberation-focused counseling courses**, exploring innovative ways to enhance student engagement, reflection, and growth. This work is timely, as we are rapidly entering a new stage of the digital age where the inclusion of AI will significantly impact both counseling practice and counselor education. The American Counseling Association has developed recommendations for the future of AI in counseling, and based on our pilot experiences, the program now plans to embed AI ethics, skills, and training across the curriculum.

DATA COLLECTED

Introduction

Data were collected from various stakeholders and multiple sources. These findings provide a holistic view of program effectiveness and areas for development. Below are the Data Sources (with CACREP Standards identified) and how they are used to inform the program.

Data Collected	What will this inform?
Admissions Data (1.V)	Admissions standards, equity in access, and recruitment strategies. Helps refine admissions criteria and outreach to ensure a diverse, prepared, and supported student body.
Advisory Board Report (2.F.2)	Continuous improvement of program mission, objectives, policies, and curriculum. Ensures field needs, community input, and liberatory frameworks are embedded in program evolution.
Adjunct Student Course Evaluations (1.R)	Hiring, training, and ongoing support of adjuncts. Informs alignment of adjunct teaching with program mission and quality standards.
Alumni Surveys (2.F.1)	Long-term effectiveness of curriculum and training. Identifies how well the program prepared graduates for the field and areas for growth.
Comprehensive Exam & NCE Reports (2.E.2)	Alignment of curriculum with knowledge standards. Identifies areas where students need additional preparation.
Demographic Data (2.E.3.a)	Admissions equity, student retention, and support needs. Informs strategies to maintain an inclusive, diverse, and equitable learning community.
Employer/Site Supervisors Surveys (2.F.1)	Graduate preparedness for clinical roles. Informs curricular emphasis, fieldwork training, and partnerships with community sites.
Enrollment Data (2.E.2, 2.E.3)	Course scheduling, faculty load, and admissions planning. Ensures program growth aligns with capacity and student needs.
Faculty Surveys (2.E.3)	Mission alignment, program climate, and faculty support needs. Informs planning for retention, workload balance, and collective goals.
Fieldwork (2.E.4)	Placement and completion rates. Informs site partnerships, student preparation, and support systems.
Graduation Data (2.E.2, 2.E.3.a)	Program completion rates. Informs curricular rigor, advising, and retention strategies.
Site Supervisor Evaluations of Students (2.M)	Aggregate data informs curriculum design, fieldwork preparation, and alignment with professional expectations.
Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Site & Supervisor (2.M)	Site quality, supervision standards, and fit. Informs partnership decisions and fieldwork preparation.

Data Collected	What will this inform?
Student Self-Reflections with Professional Dispositions Assessment (2.C.2, 2.C.3)	Aggregate data informs advising practices, curriculum design, and retention.
Student Self-Reflections with Counseling Skills Assessment (2.C.2, 2.C.3)	Aggregate data informs advising practices, curriculum design, and retention.
Student Summative Assessment scores (2.C.1.a, 2.C.1.b, 2.C.1.e, 2.C.3, 2.D., 4.D., 2.E.1)	Aggregate data informs program objectives, curriculum alignment, and long-term student success tracking. Percentage of students at each mastery level is reviewed and presented in a graph across years for annual evaluation report.

EVALUATION FINDINGS

Who Are Our Students?

Admissions Data

During the 2024–2025 academic year we completed our Fall 2025 admissions cycle. The CMHC program received **207 applications**. Of these, 110 were fully submitted with payment, and 78 were complete or near complete. From this pool, 49 applicants were invited to interview.

Due to CACREP’s required faculty–student ratio, the program extended **21 offers of admission** and placed 17 applicants on the waitlist. Of the offers extended, 19 were accepted and 2 declined. From the waitlist, 3 offers were extended, resulting in 2 denials and 1 acceptance.

Ultimately, **17 students matriculated and registered**, with **1 student choosing not to enroll**.

It should be noted that, in compliance with legal requirements, the program is not allowed to consider applicant race, gender, or other protected characteristics in the admissions process. Below, are the demographics (as indicated in Banner) for the incoming Fall 2025 Cohort.

Fall 2025 Cohort Demographics

Ethnicity by Gender	Number
F	15
1. U.S. Nonresident	0
2. Hispanic/Latino	4
4. Asian	0
5. Black or African American	1
7. White	7
8. Two or more races	3
9. Race and ethnicity unknown	0
M	3
2. Hispanic/Latino	0
4. Asian	0
5. Black or African American	1
7. White	1
8. Two or more races	1
Total	18

Interpretation / Implications

These data demonstrate both strong applicant interest and careful admissions management. While the applicant pool was robust, the program intentionally limited acceptances to attempt to remain within CACREP-required faculty–student ratios.

Our diversity recruitment plan—attending Graduate School Open Houses and prominently advertising the program’s diversity focus on the website—appears to be successful. The data indicate that the CMHC master’s program is highly sought after and continues to attract applicants from a wide range of backgrounds.

This incoming Fall 2025 cohort reflects meaningful diversity across racial and ethnic identities, with students identifying as Hispanic/Latino, Black or African American, White, and multiracial. In addition to these categories, the program’s applicant pool and admitted students also represent diversity in age, disability status, and affectional identities. This breadth of representation strengthens the learning environment by fostering dialogue across difference and equipping students to become culturally sustaining, justice-oriented counselors.

Current Enrollment Data

As of Fall 2025, the CMHC program housed **61 matriculated students**. Of these, 37 are enrolled full time, 22 part time, with 1 student on leave and 1 student completing their comprehensive exam only.

For 2024-2025, the Faculty: Student Ratios based upon Full Time Equivalency are displayed in the table below.

CMHC						
Term	Student FTE	Core FTE	Adjunct CR	Adjunct FTE	Faculty FTE	Ratio
Fall 24	48.40	2.00	34.50	2.88	4.88	9.92:1
Spring 25	44.40	2.75	24.00	2.00	4.75	9.3:1
Summer 25	32.10	2.00	6.00	0.50	2.50	12.8:1
Total Academic Year	124.90	6.75	64.50	5.38	12.13	10.3:1

Interpretation / Implications

In the department’s reconfiguration, a faculty member who had taught across programs within the old department (Counseling & School Psychology) is now housed in the other successor department but taught a course for our program as an affiliate faculty member in fall 2025. To address this shifting of faculty, CMHC faculty formally appealed to the Dean for an additional faculty position. The Dean has submitted a formal request for a Special Appointment for next academic year, with an intent for it to lead to a tenure track line. This addition will be critical to maintaining program quality, supporting accreditation compliance, and ensuring faculty capacity to effectively teach, supervise, and advise students. In the meantime, we have increased team advising to safeguard quality and compliance. We also intentionally took fewer students in the admissions process to balance the required faculty: student ratio.

Demographic Data

For the 2024-2025 year, the CMHC program had enrolled (actively taking classes) 62 master's students, with 70.1% identify as female (n=44) and 29.0% as male (n=18). Racial/ethnic representation included 3.2% Asian, 12.9% Black or African American, 29% Hispanic, and 51.6% White. Additionally, 3.2% students were U.S. Nonresident.

2024-2025 Enrollment Data by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

Demographic	F	M	N
U.S. Nonresident	2	0	2
Hispanic/Latino	15	3	18
Asian	2	0	2
Black or African American	7	1	8
White	18	14	32
Total	44	18	62

Beyond these numbers, our student body reflects significant diversity in lived experiences and identities. Students include **non-native English speakers, individuals with disabilities, queer and trans students, and people representing a wide range of religious, spiritual, and secular worldviews, as well as a broad span of age groups.**

Interpretation / Implications

*This student diversity is a recognized **strength of the program**, fostering rich classroom dialogue, preparing students to work with diverse clients, and embodying the program's mission to cultivate culturally sustaining, liberation-focused counselors. Faculty remain committed to recruiting, retaining, and supporting diverse students as a cornerstone of program excellence and social justice.*

Who Guides Our Program?

Advisory Board Report

The CMHC Advisory Board—comprised of current students, alumni, site supervisors, and campus counseling center faculty—met on April 11, 2025, to review recent program changes and anticipated shifts. The group affirmed the program’s direction and recognized that prior feedback (2024) had already led to significant changes, including strengthening trauma-focused content and retiring the PMC program to focus exclusively on the MS in CMHC. In 2025, the Board recommended increasing student support structures, expanding training in telehealth platforms, strengthening preparation for counseling children and adolescents, and providing greater exposure to private practice considerations.

Interpretation / Implications

Advisory Board feedback directly shapes program priorities, curriculum enhancements, and strategic planning, ensuring that the CMHC program remains responsive to community needs and aligned with best practices in counselor education.

Faculty Surveys

Faculty surveys were not administered during the previous cycle due to departmental restructuring and transition.

For 2025–2026, the CMHC faculty have **redesigned the survey** to serve as a tool for collective reflection, planning, and growth. Rather than focusing narrowly on evaluation of the university, the new survey emphasizes celebrating successes, identifying areas where additional support is needed, and ensuring that we continue to live into our mission of training counselors through liberatory, justice-centered, and equity-focused practice.

The **revised tool will be implemented in the 2025–2026 academic year** and will provide valuable data for continuous program improvement.

Adjunct & Core Faculty Student Course Evaluations

In addition to the faculty and program-level assessments, the CMHC faculty systematically review adjunct, affiliate, and core faculty course evaluations each semester. This process ensures that all courses—whether taught by core or adjunct faculty—uphold the same standards of quality, rigor, and liberatory, justice-centered practice. Feedback is used collaboratively to celebrate strengths, identify areas for growth, and provide support so that all students receive a consistently high-quality educational experience.

CSP 521: Addictions (Online Asynchronous)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.
- A few students in the spring semester felt disconnected from their instructor.

CSP 540: Assessment (Hybrid)

- These evaluations were not available for review, as the faculty member who taught the courses is no longer part of the department. This is an isolated circumstance and does not affect the overall comprehensiveness of our evaluation record.

CSP 549: Crisis Intervention (Hybrid)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.
- A few students felt disconnected from their instructor in the summer.
- One student felt that the sensitive nature of this top would be better met with a hybrid format.

CSP 550: Counseling Skills (On Ground)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.
- Some students indicated that they would like more focus on practicing skills and less lecture.

CSP 552: Practicum Supervision (Online Synchronous)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.

CSP 553: Practicum Seminar (Online Synchronous)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.

CSP 554: Treatment of Psychological Disorders (Hybrid)

- The overwhelming majority of student evaluations reflected that the course was of high quality, with students highlighting growth, safety, and depth of learning.
- One evaluation reflected defensiveness and misrepresentation of course content. We interpret this as a reaction to liberation-focused pedagogy, which can surface resistance when dominant cultural norms are disrupted. This highlights the importance of assessing professional dispositions early—specifically, how students engage with diverse material and respond to perspectives that challenge their worldview.

CSP 568: Counseling Across the Lifespan (Hybrid)

- Students valued the online content and course materials, and the majority described the classes as meaningful and supportive of their growth. A minority felt that there was incongruence with having a doctoral student and a faculty member lead the class together.
- Of those surveyed, a smaller group expressed feeling disconnected (1 in CSP 568 in the fall and 5 in CSP 568 in the spring). We recognize that in the spring section, this may reflect the impact of health-related absences of the professor during the semester.
- One evaluation in the Lifespan course reflected resistance to diversity-focused pedagogy and the integration of lived-experience materials (e.g., YouTube narratives). We interpret this as discomfort with nontraditional, liberation-focused approaches, which are intentionally designed to complement empirically supported frameworks by centering marginalized voices and expanding students' cultural humility.

CSP 569: Theories of Counseling (Online Asynchronous; Hybrid)

- Overall, students rated this course high quality.
- One evaluation reflected that lectures and online materials could be more engaging.
- In one section, a few students felt disconnected from their instructor

CSP 571 Diagnosis (Hybrid)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.

CSP 572 Career (Online Asynchronous)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.
- One student felt disconnected from their instructor.

CSP 578 (Hybrid)

- Overall, students rated this course high quality.
- Students valued the online content and course materials, and the majority described the classes as meaningful and supportive of their growth.
- Of those surveyed, a smaller group expressed feeling disconnected (3 in MHS 578 in Spring). We recognize that this may reflect the impact of health-related absences of the professor during the semester.

CSP 595: Ethics & Professional Orientation (Online Synchronous)

- The majority of students agreed on the high quality of this course.
- A few students felt disconnected from their instructor, and felt that online asynchronous may not be the best format for this course.

CSP 601: Advanced Counseling Procedures (On Ground)

- The overwhelming majority of student evaluations reflected that the course was of high quality

CSP 605: Child & Family Counseling (Hybrid)

- These evaluations were not available for review, as the faculty member who taught the courses is no longer part of the department. This is an isolated circumstance and does not affect the overall comprehensiveness of our evaluation record.

CSP 656: Group Counseling (On Ground)

- These evaluations were not available for review, as the faculty member who taught the courses is no longer part of the department. This is an isolated circumstance and does not affect the overall comprehensiveness of our evaluation record.

CSP 676: Internship Seminar (Online Synchronous)

- Unanimous student agreement of high quality was reflected in the evaluations.

CSP 691 (Hybrid)

- Overall, students rated this course high quality.

Interpretation / Implications

A minority of courses could not be reviewed due to the restructuring of the department. All courses moving forward will be fully evaluated in future cycles to show ongoing accountability.

Most students rated our courses offered last year as high quality.

We noted one student indicated a resistance to liberation-focused pedagogy, which may reveal not only gaps in skill or knowledge, but also professional dispositions concerns (e.g., defensiveness, misrepresentation, avoidance). This underscores the need for early identification and support when students struggle with diverse content, ensuring they are prepared to serve marginalized clients ethically and competently.

A small number of students indicated feeling disconnected from faculty. While the program has navigated significant challenges this year—including departmental reorganization and a faculty member's ongoing health-related leave—we have used these circumstances as an opportunity to strengthen communication and student support.

As part of our efforts to create more engaging hybrid and online learning experiences, we began piloting the use of AI partners in coursework. Early feedback from students indicates that this innovation has already enhanced engagement and deepened learning. In addition, the CMHC faculty have been realigning course structures with *liberated practice* in mind—emphasizing presence, engagement, and relational teaching. Faculty are providing more consistent feedback through faculty participation in discussion boards and increasing opportunities for interaction across modalities.

Programmatically, the CMHC faculty have adopted a team-based approach (i.e., students email the whole team when they have a need and we address it collectively), reviewed contact protocols with students at the start of each semester and course, and enhanced responsiveness via email. Some faculty have expanded access through appropriate use of text messaging, and a weekly program-wide email now helps ensure timely communication and shared updates. Collectively, these steps demonstrate our commitment to maintaining strong faculty–student connections, even during times of transition.

As of October 2025, we are already observing an improvement in students' sense of connection and engagement. We look forward to assessing the continued effectiveness of these strategies at the end of the semester and including formal outcomes in next year's evaluation report.

What Our Students Are Experiencing & Learning

Student Survey

Student surveys were not administered during the previous cycle due to departmental restructuring and transition.

For 2025–2026, the CMHC faculty have edited and expanded the assessment tool. The Student Survey continues to gather feedback about experiences within the program but has been substantially revised to apply a liberatory lens across all questions. Major improvements were made to emphasize transparency, inclusivity, and student voice in evaluating the program. This survey now provides a more holistic and human-centered assessment of how students experience their training and the ways the program fosters growth in knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions.

The revised tool will be implemented in the 2025–2026 academic year and will provide valuable data for continuous program improvement. The revised tool can be seen in **Appendix A**.

Student Summative Assessment Scores

Each course in the CMHC curriculum includes a culminating assignment designed to evaluate achievement of the CACREP standards assigned to that course. These summative assessments allow us to track both individual student progress and aggregate program outcomes across all eight core areas and the CMHC specialty standards.

For 2024-2025, Summative Assessment scores were collected for **CSP 540, CSP 550, CSP 568, CSP 569, CSP 578, and CSP 656**. All summative assessment scores indicated students were performing at **medium or high mastery** in all courses.

With the reorganization of the department and the transition to the 2024 CACREP Standards, faculty are **actively revising all culminating assignments** to ensure alignment with new curriculum maps. This was also the period when we transitioned from TK20 to the university-required Blackboard EAC system to collect data on summative assessments. During this time, the university experienced significant administrative turnover, resulting in the temporary loss of personnel who supported faculty in creating, uploading, and monitoring rubric completion. A new assessment role has since been established and we are currently working together with the College of Education Accreditation team to ensuring that all CMHC courses have active rubrics employed within the BlackBoard system.

While limited data were collected in the previous year due to departmental restructuring, a review of advisee degree plans indicated that all students passed their content courses (where summative assessments are captured). We expect that the upcoming cycle will provide a more complete picture of student development, allowing us to more consistently use summative assessment data for both program improvement and individual student advising.

Interpretation / Implications

- Students are meeting the requirements of at least medium mastery in all measured counseling areas.
- Ensuring that all CMHC courses have active rubrics employed within the BlackBoard system.

Student Self-Assessment of Professional Dispositions

In fall 2025, the CMHC faculty developed a new self-reflection and assessment tool for professional dispositions, adapted from the **Professional Disposition Competency Assessment–Revised (PDCA-R)** and **Professional Disposition Competency Assessment–Revised for Admission (PDCA-RA)** tools. These validated rubrics assess observable behaviors tied to nine professional disposition domains (e.g., Conscientiousness; Coping & Self-Care; Emotional Stability; Cultural Sensitivity; etc.).

We adapted these tools to include liberatory language and be worded for a self-reflection, so that the assessment focuses on growth, authenticity, and transparency rather than criticism. Additionally, the adapted PDCA-RA is now used in the admissions process (including recommendation letters and interview scoring), and the adapted PDCA-R is used throughout the student’s journey (MHS 595: Ethics & Professional Orientation; MHS 601, the Residency before practicum; and in the final semester before graduation).

Each self-reflection will be followed by faculty feedback – supportive, nonjudgmental, and developmentally focused – to help students understand their strengths and areas of growth.

In aggregate, data from these assessments will also inform ongoing program and curriculum improvements. This tool can be found in **Appendix B**.

Student Self-Assessment of Counseling Skills

In fall 2025, the CMHC faculty developed a new self-reflection and assessment tool for assessing counseling skills, adapted from the **Counseling Skills and Competencies Tool (CSCT)** into a student self-assessment instrument. The CSCT is widely used to evaluate core counseling skills such as attending, reflecting, questioning, relationship building, empathy, and session facilitation.

We intentionally revised the tool with liberatory, growth-oriented language to shift the emphasis from judgment to reflection and development. Students are asked not only to rate their confidence with specific skills but also to reflect on factors that may support or challenge their growth (e.g., health, cultural context, lived experience).

This self-assessment is completed at three critical points in the program: during MHS 550 (Counseling Skills), at the MHS 601 Residency before practicum, and in the final semester before graduation. At each stage, students will receive supportive faculty and peer feedback, allowing them to track their own development and integrate feedback into their practice.

In aggregate, data from the CSCT will also inform program-wide evaluation, highlight strengths and identify opportunities for enhancing skill development across the curriculum. This tool can be found in **Appendix C**.

Site Supervisor Evaluation of Students

Site supervisors complete an integrated evaluation of student professional dispositions and counseling skills using the **Professional Dispositions Competence Assessment (PDCA)** and the **Counseling Skills and Competencies Tool (CSCT)**. This evaluation is administered at the conclusion of each fieldwork course, providing both structured feedback for the student and systematic data for the program.

The evaluations are reviewed collaboratively in supervision with each student to guide their professional growth, clarify strengths, and identify areas for continued development. In addition, aggregated data from site supervisors are analyzed by faculty to assess how well the program is preparing students for practice and to inform curricular improvements. This dual use of the tool ensures that student learning is supported in the moment while also contributing to long-term program quality and alignment with CACREP standards.

Expectations are that students should be near or meeting expectations at Practicum and show development throughout their fieldwork experience.

Practicum Ratings

Skill Measured	Meets or Exceeds Expectations	Near Expectations	Below Expectations	Harmful
Nonverbal Skills	23	1		
Encouragers	24			
Questions	21	3		
Reflecting & Paraphrasing	23	1		
Reflection of Feelings	24			
Reflecting & Summarizing	23	1		
Reflection of Meaning	22	1	1	
Confrontation	20	4		
Goal Setting	24			
Focus of Session	23	1		
Empathy & Caring	24			
Respect & Compassion	24			
Professional Ethics	22	2		
Professional Behavior	24			
Professional & Personal Boundaries	24			
Knowledge & Adherence to Site & Course Policies	24			
Record Keeping & Task Completion	24			
Multicultural Competence	23	1		
Emotional Stability & Self Control	24			
Motivated to Learn & Grow	24			
Openness to Feedback	24			
Flexibility & Adaptability	24			
Congruence & Genuineness	24			

Internship Ratings

Skill Measured	Meets or Exceeds Expectations	Near Expectations	Below Expectations	Harmful
Nonverbal Skills	43			
Encouragers	43			
Questions	42	1		
Reflecting & Paraphrasing	43			
Reflection of Feelings	43			
Reflecting & Summarizing	42	1		
Reflection of Meaning	43			
Confrontation	42	1		
Goal Setting	42	1		
Focus of Session	43			
Empathy & Caring	43			
Respect & Compassion	43			
Professional Ethics	43			
Professional Behavior	43			
Professional & Personal Boundaries	42	1		
Knowledge & Adherence to Site & Course Policies	43			
Record Keeping & Task Completion	42	1		
Multicultural Competence	43			
Emotional Stability & Self Control	43			
Motivated to Learn & Grow	43			
Openness to Feedback	42	1		
Flexibility & Adaptability	42	1		
Congruence & Genuineness	43			

Interpretation / Implications

The practicum and internship evaluation data reflect consistently high performance across all CACREP skill areas, with the vast majority of students meeting or exceeding expectations. In practicum, a small number of students were rated Near Expectations in questioning, confrontation, and professional ethics, with only one student rated Below Expectations in reflection of meaning. In internship, nearly all students met or exceeded expectations, with only a handful of Near Expectations ratings across diverse skill areas.

These results suggest that students are graduating well-prepared for clinical practice, demonstrating strong counseling skills, professionalism, and multicultural competence. The occasional Near Expectations ratings highlight natural areas for developmental feedback, such as refining confrontation skills, strengthening professional ethics, and enhancing flexibility/adaptability. Importantly, no students were rated harmful in any category, which reflects positively on gatekeeping and training processes.

Student Evaluation of Fieldwork Site & Supervisor

At the conclusion of each fieldwork experience, students complete a reflection survey evaluating both their site and their site supervisor. This tool allows students to share feedback about the quality of supervision, the learning environment, and the opportunities for skill development provided at their placement.

Faculty review these evaluations to ensure that sites maintain high standards of training and align with program expectations. Feedback from students is also used to make future placement decisions, strengthen relationships with clinical partners, and identify areas where additional support or communication may be needed.

Most students indicated that their practicum and internship sites provided **high-quality supervision and strong opportunities for clinical training**. Only a small number of students reported areas of concern. Three students rated the availability of family counseling opportunities at their sites below expectations, suggesting that students specifically seeking to refine family counseling skills may be better placed elsewhere. One student noted that assessment/testing and career counseling opportunities were limited, and another reported poor or inconsistent direct observation in supervision as well as inconsistent access to individual and family counseling opportunities at one site. In addition, two students rated several counseling opportunities at another site as inconsistent. These locations were noted to inform future placement decisions.

Interpretation / Implications

Overall, these data affirm that students are being placed in high-quality training environments with strong supervision, while also providing valuable feedback about specific sites. The noted concerns do not indicate systemic issues across placements but rather highlight site-specific limitations that will be addressed through site supervisor orientation and training, as well as more intentional placement decisions. Moving forward, faculty will continue to use evaluation data to match students' training goals with site strengths and to avoid sites where opportunities have proven inconsistent. This ongoing evaluation process ensures both high-quality training experiences for students and strong alignment between site resources and student developmental needs.

How Our Students Grow

Fieldwork

The CMHC program requires students to complete a **100-hour practicum** (minimum 40 direct client hours) followed by a **600-hour internship** (minimum 240 direct client hours) across two semesters. These experiences provide intensive supervised training in clinical practice, bridging classroom learning with professional counseling roles.

- **Fall 2024:** 9 students in practicum and 8 students in internship. Placement rate was **100%**. Completion was **100% for practicum**; 1 student was required to retake internship, resulting in an internship completion rate of **87.5%**.
- **Spring 2025:** 15 students in practicum and 9 students in internship. Placement rate was **100%**, and completion rates were **100%** for both practicum and internship.
- **Summer 2025:** 23 students in internship (no practicum offered in summer). Placement and completion rates were both **100%**.

Interpretation / Implications

These outcomes demonstrate the program's strong community partnerships and consistent ability to secure placements for all students. The single internship retake in Fall 2024 highlights the importance of early and ongoing support to ensure readiness for the internship experience. Overall, the program shows excellent placement and completion rates, affirming the effectiveness of the fieldwork structure.

Graduation Data

We had **14 students graduate** in the 2024-2025 academic year. We track the completion rates of our program by cohort, evidenced in the table below. For the cohorts that still contain active students, the completion rate is still in progress.

CMHC Completion Rates

Cohort	N	Active	Completer	Withdrew	Withdrawal	
					Rate	Completion Rate
2019	24	0	20	4	16.67%	83.33%
2020	24	0	19	5	20.83%	79.17%
2021	20	1	15	4	20.00%	
2022	20	6	11	3	15.00%	
2023	25	16	7	2	8.00%	
2024	23	22	0	1	4.34%	
2025	18	17	0	1	5.55%	

Interpretation / Implications

The completion rates for the CMHC program reflect strong overall persistence and successful degree completion, with recent cohorts showing marked stability. **Withdrawal rates were higher during the pandemic years** (Summer 2020–Summer 2021), when 20% of students withdrew. Importantly, all withdrawals during this period were reported as due to personal reasons, with a small minority indicating that the counseling field was no longer aligned with their career goals.

Since that time, **withdrawal rates have steadily declined**, with recent cohorts demonstrating much stronger persistence (Summer 2023: 8%; Summer 2024: 4.34%). These improvements suggest that as pandemic-related disruptions have eased, students are better able to remain engaged and complete their programs.

Overall, completion rates in the program remain strong and continue to trend upward, reflecting both the resilience of students and the program's ability to provide consistent support through challenging external circumstances.

Exit Interview

Exit Interview & Alumni surveys were not administered during the previous cycle due to departmental restructuring and transition.

The Exit Interview has been revised to focus on collecting essential accreditation data and updated contact information. Graduating students will complete the Exit Interview and the Alumni Survey during MHS 676, allowing the program to gather feedback on their experiences in an anonymous format.

Although this was not administered this year, we follow up via email and personal contact with our students and are aware that 100% are employed in clinical mental health agencies and/or received acceptance into a doctoral program (n = 1). The revised tool can be found in **Appendix D**.

Alumni Surveys

The Alumni Survey has been restructured for this next year to serve as a reflective tool rather than a duplication of the student experience survey. Alumni are now invited to evaluate their readiness for professional practice and the degree to which program objectives were achieved. This shift aligns alumni feedback directly with CACREP standards and provides critical insight into how well the program prepares graduates to enter the counseling profession.

The revised tool will be implemented in the 2025–2026 academic year and will provide valuable data for continuous program improvement. The revised tool can be found in **Appendix E**.

Comprehensive Exam and Licensure Exam Reports

The CPCE is a standardized exit exam developed by the **Center for Credentialing & Education (CCE)**. It covers the eight CACREP common-core areas and is used by many counselor education programs as a summative evaluation of student knowledge.

We administer the CPCE as a required exit/comprehensive exam to ensure students meet core knowledge benchmarks before graduation. We also use results from the CPCE to help students prepare for the **National Counselor Examination (NCE)**, which is required for licensure in many states. The CPCE results are used both individually (as graduation requirements) and aggregately (to inform curriculum revisions & identify patterns across cohorts).

Students can optionally take the NCE licensure exam while they are still enrolled in the program.

For 2024-2025, there were 7 students that took the CPCE Exam, with 7 students passing, a 100% pass rate.

For 2024-2025, there were 12 students that took the NCE Exam, with 11 students passing, a 92% pass rate. We had one student take the NCMHCE Exam and passed it, yielding a 100% pass rate.

Interpretation / Implications

Using the CPCE and NCE licensure exam gives us an objective measure of students' mastery of core counseling knowledge aligned with CACREP standards. If we see consistent areas of weakness (e.g., in Assessment & Testing, or Research & Program Evaluation), faculty can adjust teaching, integrate remediation, or provide extra support.

Employers & Site Supervisor Surveys

Employer and Site Supervisory surveys were not administered during the previous cycle due to departmental restructuring and transition.

The Employer and Site Supervisor Survey was redesigned to focus on program objectives that are explicitly tied to CACREP standards. This approach ensures that feedback from external partners is directly connected to student outcomes, including professional dispositions, counseling skills, trauma-informed and healing-centered practices, and work with diverse populations. The data will help us assess whether students are meeting benchmarks for professional readiness in real-world contexts and inform curricular and training improvements.

The revised tool will be implemented in the 2025–2026 academic year and will provide valuable data for continuous program improvement. The revised tool can be found in **Appendix F**.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS

Based on evaluation results, the program has implemented targeted improvements in curriculum, advising, fieldwork processes, and community engagement. These data-driven decisions support both immediate enhancements and long-term program goals.

Moving forward, the CMHC Faculty will:

1. **Be engaged with and continue advocating for the addition of a new faculty position** to sustain program growth and maintain CACREP-required ratios.
2. Emphasize the **program's unique clinical identity within the College of Education by maintaining a year-long clinical training format** distinct from school counseling preparation.
3. Expand training on **telehealth platforms** to align with evolving clinical practices. We will add this to our program as we revise the curriculum this year.
4. **Continue to pilot the ethical and supervised use of AI learning partners in our courses** in alignment with ACA guidelines and ethical standards.
5. **Continue to strengthen student support structures** through recent and ongoing curricular changes, including weekly program emails, faculty team advising and mentoring, and focusing on professional dispositions development.
6. Maintain **oversight of the annual evaluation process** to ensure consistent data collection across surveys and summative assessment rubrics.
7. Implement the use of **Student Self-Assessment with Professional Dispositions** to enhance tracking of professional development, emphasizing early identification of student engagement with liberatory material.

LOOKING AHEAD

The program remains committed to fostering a **liberatory, student-centered learning environment** while advancing clinical excellence. Future priorities include **deepening partnerships with community agencies**, supporting **diverse faculty and student recruitment**, and **further integrating liberation frameworks** into all aspects of the program.

Faculty and the Mental Health Sciences Department, in response to program needs, student feedback, and shifting pressures in modern society, are transitioning the CMHC program into a **blended online format**. As part of this change, the curriculum is being comprehensively revised to ensure it remains engaging, liberatory, and high-quality, while also aligning with the 2024 CACREP Standards.

The revised delivery model will include a thoughtful blend of:

- Predominantly Online hybrid classes that alternate between **synchronous meetings one week and asynchronous engagement the next**, balancing real-time connection with independent reflection.
- **Online asynchronous coursework** that offers flexibility and access.
- **Required in-person residencies**, including a weekend residency (focused on preparing students for practicum) and a Professional Integration Day (a culminating event where students and faculty reflect together on growth, identity, and readiness for professional practice).

This shift positions the CMHC program to serve a broader range of students while continuing to embody its mission of training counselors who are rooted in justice, equity, and liberation-focused practice.

