



**University of the Southwest
M.S. in Clinical Mental Health Counseling**

**AY 2019-2020
Annual Report**

ANNUAL REPORT
CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING PROGRAM

2019-20 Academic Year

At the end of each year, program faculty are required to complete an annual review of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) program in fulfillment with University of the Southwest (USW) policy and the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Program (CACREP) Standards for Program Evaluation guidelines.

This document reports the third comprehensive review of this program with faculty promise that this will continue to be done annually for appropriate program monitoring and evaluation. This report will describe the data collected and the action steps planned by the program faculty. Information included in this report include:

- Program Learning Objectives (PLO) data
- Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) data
- Graphical representations across faculty
- CACREP Key Performance Indicator (KPI) data
- External Survey Data

Suggestions for program modification and improvement are embedded throughout the report. Modifications were determined by:

- 1) themes that emerged from course, student, and program data;
- 2) issues evident in preparation for CACREP accreditation and writing of the program's self-study; and
- 3) decisions made at strategic planning meetings with the core faculty, graduate advisor, and the CMHC CACREP advisory committee.

Program Overview

The Master of Science in CMHC at USW is part of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) which operates under the direction of Dr. Danny Kirkpatrick, Dean. The program is 60 credit hours and the program's degree plan can be found on the CMHC webpage in the College of Arts and Sciences at www.usw.edu.

USW's Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program is designed to meet, and in some instances exceed, professional licensing requirements in many states. USW's program meets all standards and regulations for professional licensure in the state of New Mexico. Upon graduation, an individual meets the requirements for the New Mexico Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) license that allows the graduate to practice (under professional supervision) for the required 3000 hours of practice before application for licensure as a Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor (LPCC) in New Mexico.

The Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at University of the Southwest offers a 60-hour program, which fully prepares students to achieve licensure and work in a variety of human service settings. USW's CMHC program faculty is passionate about training professional counselors. The online environment provides learning opportunities for traditional and non-traditional students through a rigorous program of study that stresses education, skill development, research, and service to others.

Program Mission

CMHC MISSION STATEMENT: The faculty of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) graduate program at University of the Southwest (USW) is committed to the education and training of professional, competent mental health counselors who are dedicated to the ideals of servant leadership, diversity, and social justice.

Vision: The CMHC program prepares professional mental health counselors for future work in a broad range of treatment settings through structured academic and practical experiences in accordance with state and national counseling standards.

Graduate Faculty and Staff

Carol Brennan Ph.D., LPCC, NCC, RPT/S

Program Coordinator of Clinical Mental Health Counseling & Associate Professor

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Areas of expertise: Child counseling, play therapy, bonding and attachment, filial therapy, human development, ethics, and assessment clinical mental health counseling.

Alan Lobaugh Ph.D., M.Div., LPC/S, RPT/S

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Areas of expertise: Play therapy, group counseling, couples counseling, and support groups in grief, divorce, and addiction.

Christine McNichols Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC

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Areas of expertise: Creativity in counseling/training/supervision, spirituality in counseling, post-modern approaches, rural supervision

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Student Learning Outcomes

Students share in the responsibility for a successful university educational experience. Upon completion of their degree and regardless of disciplinary major, students are expected to demonstrate ability in five essential areas: *Communication, Knowledge, Critical Thinking, Servant Leadership, and Academic & Professional Integrity.*

Program Learning Objectives/Outcomes

CMHC PROGRAM LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

PLO 1: Counseling Orientation and Professional Practice

Understand the history, philosophy, and ethics of the counseling profession and become active members in professional counseling organizations.

PLO 2: Social and Cultural Diversity

Apply and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and practices to counsel and advocate for individuals, families, and groups through culturally appropriate practice promoting social justice, equity, and access.

PLO 3: Human Growth and Development

Understand the importance of individual and family development across the lifespan and how this affects functioning and behavior.

PLO 4: Career Development

Understand the interrelationship between work and mental well-being and strategies for individual career development.

PLO 5: Counseling and Helping Relationships

Employ culturally appropriate practice in the education, prevention, evaluation, and treatment of mental and emotional disorders.

PLO 6: Group Counseling and Group Work

Understand the foundations, approaches, and strategies to working effectively with clients in groups.

PLO 7: Assessment and Testing

Identify and implement appropriate and holistic clinical evaluation and assessment of normal and abnormal development and behavior, including the treatment of trauma and addictions.

PLO 8: Research and Program Evaluation

Utilize mental health research and evidenced-based treatments, and apply models of program process and outcome evaluation to professional practice.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

University of the Southwest maintains five Student Learning Outcome categories upon which programs are evaluated. These outcomes are consistent with the mission and vision USW has for its' graduates. Annual evaluation of these SLO's ensure academic programming remains effective. Graduates of the CMHC program will demonstrate the following at the conclusion of their academic preparation and practical training:

SLO 1. Knowledge

- a. Knowledge of counseling theories, professional competencies, and research-informed best practices in diverse professional counseling settings.
- b. Knowledge of the counseling profession including professional roles, identity, and functions.
- c. Knowledge and understanding of the requirements of professional licensure in students' respective states.

SLO 2. Critical Thinking

- a. Critical thinking to apply and analyze information from core curriculum areas to conceptualize the needs of a wide range of counseling populations.
- b. Critical thinking in diagnosis, intervention, and treatment planning in order to serve the counseling needs of a wide range of populations.

SLO 3. Servant Leadership

- a. Serving and advocating for diverse populations with awareness and compassion through appropriate skills and techniques.
- b. Serving clients through teaching and modeling of self-care.

SLO 4. Communication

- a. Communicate, engage, and interact effectively with peers, instructors, and supervisors.
- b. Communicate with clients in ways that show empathy, acceptance, and cultural sensitivity.

SLO 5. Academic and Professional Integrity

- a. Understand, follow, and apply ethical and legal guidelines in the counseling of diverse populations.
- b. Discern quality research to implement scientifically-informed best practices in mental health counseling practices.

AY 2019-20 CMHC Program Activity

The CMHC program experienced many successes during the 2019-20 academic year. A third core faculty member, Dr. Christine McNichols was hired in Spring 2019 to start as a full time non-resident faculty member starting in Fall 2019.

The focus of the 2019-20 AY for the CMHC program was successful completion of the CACREP accreditation process which had formally begun with the submission of the program's self-study in March 2019.

The Fall 2019 term was largely spent writing the Addendum that the CACREP Review Committee had requested in response to our submitted self-study. The Addendum was approximately 35 pages with over 100 pages of supporting documentation. It was submitted to CACREP for review in early December 2019.

Word was received in late February 2020 that CACREP recommended a site visit for the CMHC program. This final step in the accreditation process affirmed the work that had been done in recent years to successfully align USW's CMHC program with the 2016 CACREP Accreditation Standards.

Due to the onset and spread of the COVID pandemic in early 2020, in-person site visits were indefinitely postponed by CACREP. After a brief period of time, a virtual site visit option was offered to USW's CMHC program. With the support of the faculty and administration, the virtual site visit was scheduled for August 3-5, 2020.

The CACREP site visit involved many campus faculty and staff. Over the course of two and a half days, the three-person site team met via Zoom meetings with individual faculty, adjuncts, groups of current CMHC students as well as alumni, selected USW staff, USW's President, Provost and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), and the CMHC Advisory Board.

The site team completed their review of the CMHC program with an Exit Meeting on the morning of the third day, August 5, 2020. Their findings were shared with CMHC faculty as well as the Provost and the Dean of CAS. The final site visit report was submitted to the CACREP board once the visit was completed. It was received by USW a few weeks later. The CMHC faculty composed a response to the report and submitted it to CACREP within 30 days following its' receipt. The CACREP Board of Directors will vote on the accreditation status of USW's CMHC program at the January 2021 meeting.

Changes and modifications to the CMHC program continued during the 2019-20 AY. Having become more familiar with CACREP accredited programs, the CMHC faculty made the decision to combine the COUN 5123 Professional Orientation to Counseling course with the COUN 5213 Professional Ethics and the Law in Counseling course. This allowed for the addition of a second course in advanced theories and practices without increasing the total number of required courses in the 60-hour degree plan. The new course which would be required starting with the Fall 2020 term was created, presented, and approved as COUN 5133 CMHC: Foundations and Ethics.

The addition of a required extra skills and practices course was warranted by the 2016 CACREP standards. It also coincided with the goal of allowing students more time to address topics the CMHC faculty did not feel were adequately covered in other coursework. The course was presented and approved as COUN 5603 Advanced Processes in Counseling, and the degree plan was revised.

The CACREP site visit brought some issues to light that had to be addressed for USW's program to be in compliance with the standards. These included increasing the length of the Practicum course to comply with the 10-week minimum required by CACREP. This was accomplished by

removing a course that had been approved as a requirement earlier (COUN 5603 Advanced Processes in Counseling) in the academic year. Practicum I and Practicum II (COUN 5833 and COUN 5933 respectively) were created, presented, and approved, and the revised degree plan (still 60 credit hrs.) was approved. This program revision will take effect for all students starting SP A 21. Students were informed immediately thereafter with an announcement from the CMHC Practicum and Internship Coordinator, posted in all courses in FA A 20 and FA B 20.

The CMHC program formed an Advisory Board in early 2020 per CACREP standards. It was decided that setting 2 meetings per calendar year was an appropriate plan, and an invitation was sent to serve on USW's CMHC Advisory Board. The Board convened for the first time in March 2020. An agenda and the prior years' annual report were shared with the members of the Advisory Board as well as an update on CACREP accreditation. The next meeting of the CMHC Advisory Board was planned for Fall 2020.

Students were offered the opportunity to take the Practice Comprehensive Exam, offered through Cengage, on selected dates during Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 terms. The exam is set up much as the National Counseling Exam (NCE) is, and it is offered during two or three consecutive days for a four-hour block per day. The Practice Exam is included in all Practicum and Internship courses, and students are able to take it more than once during their time in these courses.

The capstone Portfolio assignment was more clearly delineated during the current academic year, and almost every 8-week term, at least one student presented their Portfolio during Internship II.

Program Enrollment, Retention, and Persistence

University of the Southwest's CMHC program experienced some instability during the 2019-20 academic year in terms of new student enrollment. Fall B 19 and Summer A and B 20 saw the highest numbers of new students enrolled while FA A 19 and SP A 20 recorded the lowest numbers. Typically, the largest number of new enrollees is expected in the FA A term.

The chart below shows that the largest number of new students began the program in the SU A 20 term, with a total of 9. The lowest number of students beginning the program occurred in the FA A 19 term.

The fluctuation in numbers of new students being admitted and enrolled in the CMHC program during the 2019-20 AY is believed to have been due to not having a CACREP accredited program. USW's enrollment counselors have reported during the 2019-20 AY that prospective applicants have increasingly showed a preference for a CACREP accredited program.

The chart below includes the numbers of new students enrolled by 8 week terms during the 2019-20 AY. A total of thirty-three new students were admitted to the CMHC program starting

with the FA A 19 term and ending with the SU B 20 term. Fifteen students completed the program during the current AY.

Overall, the CMHC program averaged 6 new students admitted every 8-week term, completed an average of 3 students every term, and averaged 58 heads enrolled per term. Student retention rates per term averaged 97% in the program for the year.

Due to some students taking a term off, stopping out due to restrictions and circumstances surrounding the onset and continuation of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID 19), as well as some students not actively enrolled due to academic probation, the number of continuing students in the program during the current academic year (AY) averaged 84. This number is quite a bit higher than the number of enrolled “heads” or students which averaged 56. Some plausible ideas as to the difference between these two average scores follows.

SP A 20, SU A 20 and SU B 20 saw a decline in number of continuing students as compared to the other three terms in the AY. This seems to reflect the restrictions experienced by the national coronavirus pandemic. Many students have reported having to alter their day-to-day schedules to adjust for child care, employment changes, and so on. Students who were enrolled in Practi-

CMHC - Enrollment, Retention, and Persistence								
CAMS TERM	Academic Calendar	New Students	Continuing Students	Total Heads	Credits	FTE	Comple-tions	Reten-tion Rate
19GRFAA	Fall A 19	2	89	47	207	35	2	85%
19GRFAB	Fall B 19	7	88	60	183	31	3	117%
20GRSPA	Spring A 20	3	88	58	204	34	3	97%
20GRSPB	Spring B 20	5	80	56	165	28	3	93%
20GRSUA	Summer A 20	9	80	56	210	35	2	89%
20GRSUB	Summer B 20	7	81	56	192	32	2	91%
Mean		6	84	56	194	32	3	97%

cum and Internship when the pandemic struck were fortunate enough to be kept on at their sites using social distancing and telehealth. As the pandemic continues, it is anticipated that students will have difficulty finding sites for Practicum and Internship that will accommodate new students. This seems to have already impacted some CMHC students who have chosen to take an additional elective course while they wait for the pandemic restrictions to improve.

Program Evaluation

The CMHC program’s evaluation plan includes specific key assignments as well as student performance and professional dispositions. The assessment plan consists of 45 items located across the curriculum, including:

- Key assignments located in core courses that represent comprehensive assessments of student learning including:
- Site supervisor evaluations of Practicum and Internship students
- Graduate/ Alumni Survey
- Capstone Portfolio - completed during last semester of internship
- Counseling Skills Assessments (CSA) completed by the students as a self-reflective tool
- Evaluation of Student Dispositions - completed annually by core faculty

For the 2019-20 AY 6 items were not met in the program evaluation plan. Faculty met to view the results of our program evaluation and develop action plans for each item that was not met. Action items included providing extra support to students, editing and clarifying assignments, encouraging student completion of key assignments, and in some cases, eliminating the assessment point.

Overall, the program is in transition as we continue to refine the program evaluation plan to align more closely to CACREP standards and provide faculty with meaningful feedback.

Executive Summary

The CMHC program has an extensive program assessment and evaluation plan. The plan includes multiple data points across the curriculum based on the results of selected comprehensive assignments, counseling skills assessments completed by the students, site supervisor evaluations, comprehensive portfolio scores, graduate/alumni surveys, and faculty evaluations of student dispositions. The results of the plan summarized in this document represent the portion of the program evaluation plan that aligns with the university's Student Learning Objectives.

Overall, the plan is intended to better inform faculty of the success of our program planning as well as measure student learning. The CMHC evaluation plan is an evolving document as feedback from the data gathered each academic year allows the faculty to assess student learning and identify strengths and areas for improvement.

Our 2019-20 program assessment results have revealed that while there have been successes, there have also been shortcomings. Some assignments will remain in the overall plan for the coming AY, 2020-21, and continue to be monitored. Other assignments have been revised and some will be reexamined during the coming academic year.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Brennan PhD

Carol Brennan PhD, LPCC, NCC, RPT-S
CMHC Program Coordinator

Completed: 12.1.20