



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

**AY 2020-2021
Annual Report**

ANNUAL REPORT
CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING PROGRAM
2020-21 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 Programs (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 <https://www.usw.edu/Academics/College-of-Arts-Sciences/Graduate-Programs/MS-in-Clinical-Mental-Health>

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 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

Email: cbrennan@usw.edu

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

Assistant Professor, Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Email: alobaugh@usw.edu

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

Christine McNichols Ph.D., LPC, NCC

Associate Professor, Clinical Mental Health Counseling

Practicum and Internship Coordinator

Email: cmcnichols@usw.edu

Areas of expertise:

Lauren "Kitty" Keim

Director of Graduate Admissions and Student Support, College of Arts & Sciences

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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.

PLO 9: CMHC Specialty Area

Understand and apply a broad range of mental health techniques and interventions for the prevention and treatment of mental health concerns.

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 2020-21 CMHC Program Activity

The CMHC program experienced many successes during the 2020-21 academic year.

The focus of the 2020-21 Academic Year (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 CACREP Site Visit was successfully conducted in early August 2020.

Enrollment numbers had increased enough by the start of the Fall 2020 term that 2 adjunct faculty members needed to be hired, starting with the FA B 20 term.

The CACREP 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 was scheduled to vote on the accreditation status of USW's CMHC program at the January 2021 meeting.

In March 2021 the program was informed of its 2-year accreditation from CACREP. The CMHC program had successfully met 176 of the 178 CACREP accreditation standards. A report detailing the meeting of the two unmet standards must be submitted to the CACREP Board by October 2022. At that time if determined that the two remaining standards have been met, the Board will grant the remaining six years of the eight-year accreditation cycle.

Changes and modifications to the CMHC program initiated during the 2019-20 AY became reality in the 2020-21 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.

Advisory Board

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. The CMHC Advisory Board convened for the first time in March of the 2019-20 Academic Year (AY).

During the 2020-21 AY the Advisory Board met in October 2020 and again in March 2021. An agenda as well as the prior years' annual report was shared during the October meeting with the members of the Advisory Board. An update on the CACREP site visit and status of our accreditation process was provided.

The next meeting of the CMHC Advisory Board was held late in March 2021. An agenda was shared and the good news was shared that USW's CMHC program had been granted a 2 year accreditation.

Changes/updates to CMHC courses and curriculum

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.

Faculty Evaluations, Review, Updates

The CMHC program's core faculty participated in peer evaluations of courses selected by the Dean in February 2021. Each faculty member was assigned a reviewer who was a full-time faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences. Drs. Brennan, Lobaugh and McNichols also served as peer reviewers for assigned faculty in the College.

Dr. Carol Brennan, CMHC Program Coordinator made application in March 2021 to be promoted from Associate Professor to Full Professor starting with the 2021-22 AY. Dr. Brennan's application was approved, and her title change became effective with the start of the new academic year.

The faculty reviews by students in the CMHC as reported in the End of Course Surveys at the end of all 6 eight-week terms during the 2020-21 AY of Drs. Brennan, Lobaugh and McNichols were overwhelmingly positive. Individual faculty members including adjunct instructors, receive their survey results a week or so after the conclusion of a term.

The entire CACREP application, review and approval process was a very large part of Drs. Brennan, Lobaugh and McNichols service to the university and continues to be. However, once the CMHC program's site visit was completed, the faculty had a little more time to contribute as they waited for the Board's decision.

Dr. Alan Lobaugh advised the Dean during the Fall 2020 term as the Dean worked on a proposed doctoral program of study. Dr. Christine McNichols served on the IRB was voted in by the faculty to be the IRB Chair for the 2021-22 AY, and Dr. Carol Brennan began to serve on some dissertation committees.

Program Enrollment, Retention and Persistence

University of the Southwest's CMHC program experienced some instability in terms of enrollment during the 2019-20 AY, presumably due to the national COVID pandemic as well as the fact that the program had not yet been accredited by CACREP. Enrollment each term ranged between 54 and 63 students.

A total of 37 new students were admitted to the CMHC program during the 2020-21 AY (revised from the prior figure of 41 in the CAS Annual Report). Overall, the program's retention rates from term to term were strong, with an average retention rate for the 2020-21 being 93%. A total of 20 students completed the CMHC program during the 2020-21 AY. And 12 students withdrew or stopped out of the program for more than a year. USW's policy is such that if a student is not enrolled for one year or longer, that a new application for admission/readmission to the program must be made.

Many students who were found to be stopping out for an 8-week term or longer were those who had difficulty finding Practicum and Internship sites. The pandemic continued to largely impact face to face services negatively and some sites reportedly were hesitant to take on new students in the midst of having to offer reduced services and increasing delivery of services virtually. The graph below shows enrollment by 8-week term during the 2020-21 AY.

This seems to have already impacted some CMHC students who have chosen to take an additional elective course while they waited for the pandemic restrictions to improve.

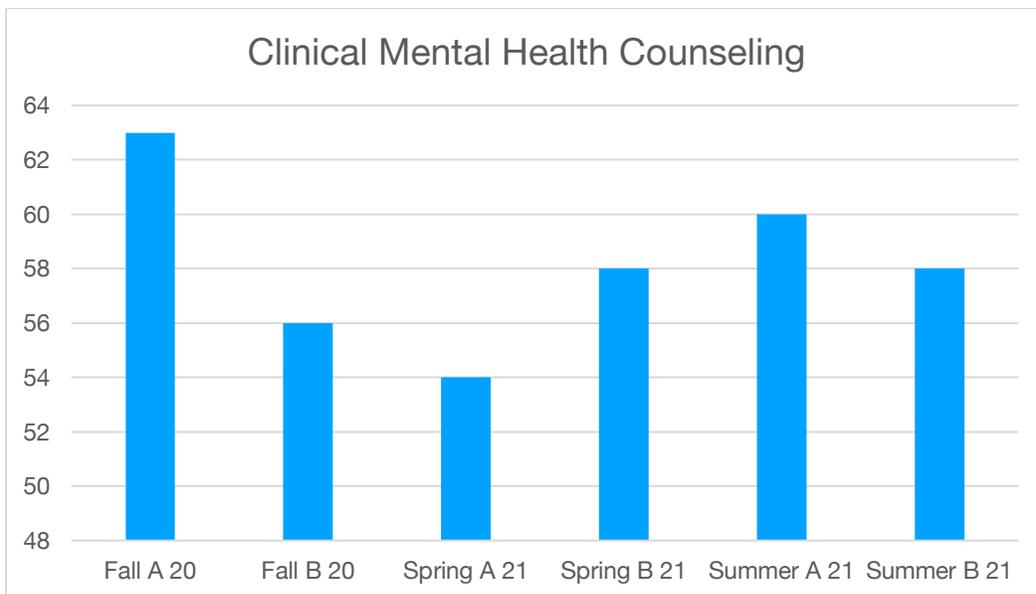
The program experienced its lowest enrollment numbers of 2020-21 in the SP A 21 term, just prior to receiving notice of CACREP accreditation.

COLL TERM	Academic Calendar	New Students	Continuing Students	Total Heads	Credits	FTE	Completions	Retention Rate
20GRFAA	Fall A 2020	4	82	63	225	19	4	
20GRFAB	Fall B 2020	3	83	56	225	19	6	90%
21GRSPA	Spring A 2021	6	77	54	192	16	5	96%
21GRSPB	Spring B 2021	10	74	58	237	20	2	98%
21GRSUA	Summer A 2021	6	76	60	237	20	0	97%
21GRSUB	Summer B 2021	8	81	58	195	16	3	83%
Mean		6	79	58	219	18	3	93%

Once CMHC was accredited, the CMHC webpage (<https://www.usw.edu/Academics/College-of-Arts-Sciences/Graduate-Programs/MS-in-Clinical-Mental-Health>) within the College of Arts and Sciences was changed to reflect its new status, and the Provost directed IT to post its new status on the University's Home Page banner rotation.

The CMHC program was the topic for the University President’s weekly blog (<https://blogs.usw.edu/?m=202103>) soon after and plans were made by the Provost to create a promotional campaign for CMHC that would run in selected markets leading up to the start of the Fall 2021 term.

The promotional campaign was designed and projected to run in selected target markets. The Program Coordinator worked with USW’s online marketing consultant and the campaign showed success in a very short time. An example of this success was demonstrated by the number of program applications suddenly received from residents in New York State, and other states that had previously required a CACREP program or degree in order to be eligible for professional counseling licensure. The number of applicants to the program was increasing substantially by the end of the 2020-21 AY.



Newly admitted students started out slowly in FA A 20. However, these numbers increased across successive terms and all totaled, the program admitted 37 new students during the 2020-21 AY. Twenty students successfully completed the CMHC program during the 2020-21 AY. The CMHC program’s overall retention rate for the 2020-21 AY was 93%.

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:

- o Site supervisor evaluations of Practicum and Internship students
- o Graduate/ Alumni Survey
- o Capstone Portfolio - completed during last semester of internship
- o Counseling Skills Assessments (CSA) completed by the students as a self-reflective tool
- o Evaluation of Student Dispositions - completed annually by core faculty

Data collected for the 2020-21 AY across the 6 eight-week terms starting with FA A 2020 through the end of SU B 21 indicated that 5 items of 45 in the program evaluation were not met.

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.

The Survey of Recent Graduates is a CMHC tool that is sent out once per year to students who have completed the program within the past two to three years. It provides information including but not limited to the students having taken the national licensing exam, the students passing the national exam on the first attempt, the students employment in the mental health field, and On the survey for the current AY, of the students who responded and had taken the national exam, 90% passed on the first attempt.

The Graduate Alumni Survey is sent out by the College of Arts and Sciences and solicits information regarding graduates' satisfaction overall, and with specific elements of their degree program. The survey was sent out in FA B 20 for first time by the College of Arts and Sciences. As of the end of the 2020-21 AY only 4 responses had been received from CMHC graduates. Results of this survey showed that of the graduates who responded, all responded that they were "likely" or "very likely" to recommend the CMHC program to relatives or friends. Three of the 4 respondents stated that they were "very satisfied" with their CMHC instructors. All agreed that the program met their expectations "well" or "very well."

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 represents 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 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.

The program appears to be successful and increasingly robust. We will continue to refine the program evaluation plan to align more closely to CACREP standards and provide faculty with meaningful feedback.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Brennan PhD

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

Completed: 12.2.21

Revised: 12.3.21

