

**University of Alabama at Birmingham**

School of Education

*Department of Human Studies*

Counseling Program

2020-2021 State of the Program Report

**Current Affiliated Faculty**

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## Executive Summary

### Introduction

The UAB Counseling Program (CP) relies on data from various sources to inform programmatic decisions. These data can be divided into two categories including: enrollment data and learning outcomes. Enrollment data is used to document trends in the characteristics of applicants, current students, and alumni. Learning outcomes are used to assess whether students are indeed acquiring and demonstrating the knowledge, skills, and abilities targeted by the current curriculum. A detailed outline regarding the CP's assessment procedures is documented in the UAB Program Assessment and Evaluation Manual (available on the UAB Counseling Program website at <https://www.uab.edu/education/home/images/pdf/hs/cep-prog-eval-manual.pdf>). The purpose of the current report is to summarize program data in an effort to guide decision making and program development, and inform program stakeholders.

### *Enrollment Data*

Enrollment data is collected via three data sources: Admission/Application Data, Enrollment or Headcount Data, and Specialty Track Data. This total may include certificate-only students. Overall, enrollment increased in the 2020-2021 academic year due to increased applications in the 2019-2020 and 2020-21 academic years, as well as admission decisions made in spring 2020 when there was a program-high count of six faculty members.

<b>Enrollment Data</b>	
<b>Academic</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>Fall 2016</b>	91
<b>Spring 2017</b>	98
<b>Summer 2017</b>	64
<b>Fall 2017</b>	94
<b>Spring 2018</b>	101
<b>Summer 2018</b>	78
<b>Fall 2018</b>	99
<b>Spring 2019</b>	106
<b>Summer 2019</b>	88
<b>Fall 2019</b>	111
<b>Spring 2020</b>	115
<b>Summer 2020</b>	95
<b>Fall 2020</b>	118
<b>Spring 2021</b>	136
<b>Summer 2021</b>	116

Student enrollment is also tracked by each specialty. A review of the data indicates that the School Counseling (SC) track has largely remained stable, though numbers have slightly trended down for this specialty in 20-21. Program faculty will continue to monitor this trend to see if this pattern continues.

Substantial declines in summer enrollment can be observed as a result of the discontinuation of clinical coursework by SC students. This program policy was implemented due to an increasing number of districts transitioning summer school programs to an online format. As such, there were less opportunities for obtaining direct hours. The program also traditionally offers less courses overall in the summer semester.

Enrollment in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) has steadily increased since Fall 2016, which also reflects increasing application numbers. The Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling (MCFC) concentration, which began in Fall 2016 has also steadily grown each year. This has especially increased since the CMHC certificate was added in 2019 which allowed MCFC students to also take the CMHC courses as part of their program of study. The CMHC certificate was developed in response to feedback from students who were interested in the MCF concentration, but who wanted coursework in both MCF and CMH.

The CP does have some students (normally graduates of Counseling Programs, including UAB's) who are admitted just for completion of the MCFC and CMHC certificates, and those numbers are listed below. As the numbers demonstrate, enrollment in these certificate-only options has steadily increased.

	<b>CMHC</b>	<b>SC</b>	<b>MCFC</b>	<b>MCFC Cert.- Only</b>	<b>CMHC Cert.- only</b>
Fall 2016	59	28	1	3	
Spring 2017	63	31	2	2	
Summer 2017	44	15	1	4	
Fall 2017	60	25	5	4	
Spring 2018	66	25	6	4	
Summer 2018	56	12	8	2	
Fall 2018	66	23	8	2	
Spring 2019	72	21	11	2	
Summer 2019	62	12	10	4	
Fall 2019	76	22	12	1	
Spring 2020	80	22	12	1	
Summer 2020	63	16	9	7	1
Fall 2020	87	18	13	5	1
Spring 2021	96	19	21	7	1

Summer 2021	83	14	19	9	2
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CMHC: Clinical Mental Health Counseling; SC: School Counseling; MCFC: Marriage Couples and Family Counseling; MCFC Cert.: Marriage, Couples, and Family Counseling Certificate; CMHC Cert: Clinical Mental Health Counseling Certificate

NOTE: The MCFC and MCFC Cert programs began Fall 2016. The CMHC Cert. program began Fall 2019 for internal students, and Summer 2020 for external certificate-only students.

### National Counselor Examination (NCE) Examination Results 2017-2021

Date of NCE	Number Tested	Number Passed	Passage Rate
April 2017	1	1	100%
October 2017	3	3	100%
April 2018	3	3	100%
Fall 2018	7	7	100%
Spring 2019	14	13	93%
Fall 2019	4	4	100%
Spring 2020	18	16	88%
Fall 2020	10	9	90%
Spring 2021	17	17	100%

As evidenced by this chart, UAB Counseling student pass rates remain consistently high for the NCE.

NOTE: The NCE is typically offered in the Fall and Spring each year.

### **Key Program Indicator: CPCE Examination Results (Non-Exit) Fall 2020**

\*The following results reflect scores from Fall 2020, Spring 2021, and Summer 2021 examinations. The CPCE is taken by each student the semester before they plan on beginning clinicals around their last year of the program. The UAB scores and National scores represent those students who took the exam as a non-exit exam. The UAB internal Counseling Program pass rate for 2020-2021 was 92.5%. Of the 28 students who took the exam, 25 passed; 3 did not. It should be noted that students may take the exam up to three times in an attempt to pass, so these numbers may reflect multiple attempts by some students.

<b>Exam Section</b>	<b>UAB Results (Average Score) n=12</b>	<b>2020 National Results (Average Score)</b>
Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice	11.67	9.2
Social & Cultural Diversity	10.5	9.8
Human Growth & Development	11.4	9.6
Career Development	12.72	8.8
Counseling & Helping Relationships	12.0	9.6
Group Counseling & Group Work	13.82	12.2
Assessment & Testing	10.6	9.2
Research & Program Evaluation	12.07	9.6
Total Score	94.9	79

### CPCE Examination Results (Non-Exit) Spring & Summer 2021

<b>Exam Section</b>	<b>UAB Results (Average Score) n=28</b>	<b>2021 National Results (Average Score)</b>
Professional Counseling Orientation & Ethical Practice	14.51	9.04
Social & Cultural Diversity	9.77	8.81
Human Growth & Development	9.83	11.31
Career Development	12.27	9.04
Counseling & Helping Relationships	10.51	8.38
Group Counseling & Group Work	13.07	9.08
Assessment & Testing	10.77	9.73
Research & Program Evaluation	12.12	8.69
Total Score	92.89	74.08

From this data, it appears that UAB counseling students, on average, score significantly above the national average for the total score. According to the above data, UAB Counseling students appear to consistently demonstrate strong performances in Group Counseling, Professional Orientation & Ethics, Career Development, and Research & Program Evaluation as compared to the national mean (more than 1.6 points higher on average). Conversely, UAB student scores tend to fall a bit closer to the national means (within 1 point, but not less than .7 on average) in Social & Cultural Diversity. The only category where UAB students seem to fall below the national mean was in the 2021 results in Human Growth & Development. It is worth noting, however, that in the Fall 2020 results, UAB students scored 1.8 points higher than the national

mean in that category. Counseling Program faculty will continue to monitor the scores for these two areas in subsequent exams to see if an evaluation of the curriculum/texts used needs to occur in the future.

### **Key Program Indicator: Counselor Competencies Scale (CCS)**

#### **Midterm and Final Evaluations for ECG 695, 696, and 697 AY 2019-2020**

The Counselor Competencies Scale (CCS) is a Key Performance Indicator administered to all students in each semester of clinicals in ECG 695, ECG 696, and ECG 697. Clinical site supervisors complete the CCS for each student midway through the semester (the midterm evaluation), and at the end of the semester (the final evaluation). The CCS evaluates 32 clinical skills and professional dispositions through 3 sections (Primary Counseling Skills, Professional Dispositions, and Professional Behaviors), and has 4 categories: Unacceptable (score of 1), Near Expectations (score of 2), Meets Expectations (score of 3), and Exceeds Expectations (score of 4). Students are expected to have an average score of at least 3 on the CCS at the conclusion of each clinical semester.

#### **2020-2021 AY CCS Average Scores**

<b>Course</b>	<b>Midterm Evaluation</b> (Range 1.0-4.0)	<b>Final Evaluation</b> (Range 1.0-4.0)
ECG 695: Practicum II	3.31	3.65
ECG 696: Counseling Internship A	3.55	3.55
ECG 697: Counseling Internship B	3.83	3.83

As evidenced by the above chart, for academic year 2020-2021, Counseling Program students, on average, scored above the Meets Expectations/Demonstrates Competencies category (3.0) for both the midterm and final evaluations. Each semester students either increased or maintained scores from the midterm to the final evaluation towards the Exceeds Expectations/Demonstrates Competencies category (4.0). Due to the notable lack of variance between the Internship midterm and final evaluations, CP faculty plan to more clearly communicate the intended use of the evaluation and the value of each category to site supervisors and students.

#### **Key Program Indicators: Academic Assignments/ Exams in core curriculum:**

In the UAB Counseling Program Evaluation and Assessment Manual, the Counseling Program identified assignments/exams in 8 core courses that were designated as Key Performance Indicators. The scores for these assignments/exams are recorded for each student for each semester that the particular course is taught. For the 2020-2021 academic year, 100% of students passed these KPI assignments/exams.

### **Non-Academic Program Outcomes:**

All students who graduated in the 2020-2021 academic year completed eight counseling sessions as a client prior to starting clinical courses. All students who graduated during this academic period completed 15 hours of approved counseling-related professional development training while enrolled in the UAB Counseling Program. At least half of these hours are completed through workshops and monthly seminars offered by the UAB Counseling Program's Zeta Chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, the international counseling honor society. A small number of students who graduated in 2020-2021 presented at a counseling or related conference (some students presented at the 2019 Alabama Counseling Association (ALCA) annual conference). Due to the cancellation of the on-site 2020 ALCA conference, the graduate poster session was not held in 2020, which meant that the usual presentation opportunity for students was not available. Thus, this requirement was temporarily waived for graduating students.

### **Faculty Changes in 2020-2021 academic year:**

During the 2020-2021 academic year, the program had two visiting instructors on staff, Dr. Sara Lappan and Dr. Danielle Pester, who were both hired in 2019. The other full-time program faculty in academic year 2020-2021 consisted of Dr. Shannon McCarthy, Assistant Professor, then-Interim Clinic Director, and CACREP Liaison, and Dr. Dayna Watson, Assistant Professor, Program Director, and then-Clinical Placement Coordinator. In Summer 2020, Dr. Larry Tyson retired, and Dr. Sean Hall left the UAB Counseling Program for another professional opportunity, leaving four faculty for the 2020-2021 year.

For Fall 2020 and Spring 2021, Dr. Shannon McCarthy was named the Interim Executive Director of the Community Counseling Clinic (CCC), and Dr. Sara Lappan was named the Interim Clinical Director of the CCC. For the summer 2021 semester, Dr. McCarthy assumed all Interim Clinic Director duties. Starting in the Summer of 2020, Dr. Dayna Watson took over duties as Chapter Faculty Advisor for Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) Zeta Chapter, UAB's chapter of the international counseling honor society. Dr. McCarthy became the Counseling Program's CACREP Liaison in the summer of 2020.

Three CP faculty searches were conducted throughout the 2020-2021 academic year due to the departure of two core faculty members, and the impending departures of the two visiting faculty members (due to the completion of their contracts). Dr. Dwayne White was hired beginning fall 2021 as a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor specializing in Clinical Mental Health, and Dr. Yusen Zhai was hired beginning fall 2021 as a Tenure-Track Assistant Professor specializing in

Clinical Mental Health, and as the new Community Counseling Clinic Director. A third faculty search for a school counseling faculty member did not result in a hire during this academic period at that time (this search was conducted again in the 21-22 academic year and that search did result in a hire).

### **Curriculum Changes:**

In response to the increasing demand from employers and students for specific Motivational Interviewing training in the Counseling Program, the UAB CP offered a new course in Fall 2020; ECG 616: Motivational Interviewing, which was developed as an online course. This course was taught by an adjunct faculty member and alum of the Counseling Program who is a Motivational Interviewing National Trainer.

For Fall 2020, the entire Counseling Program curriculum continued online due to UAB policies in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The majority of the Counseling Program's courses remained online for Spring 2021, with some courses shifting to a hybrid format for that semester. By Summer 2021, all courses that had previously been taught in-person, were once again taught on-campus. Throughout the 20-21 academic year, Counseling Program instructors participated in continuing professional development, particularly in the area of online teaching through program-sponsored workshops, university teaching consultants, peer review of online modules, etc., to ensure that course content was being presented according to CACREP and professional standards.

### **CACREP Updates:**

Having received full CACREP re- accreditation (until 2026) in the summer of 2020 for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling concentrations, the MCF concentration received initial accreditation in Spring 2021. This granted CACREP status retroactively for all MCF graduates dating back to 2019.

The Counseling Program continued to implement CACREP's temporary Covid-19 adjustments including allowing students to carry over clinical hours from Practicum II to Internship semesters, allowing distance supervision and distance counseling for clinical hours, etc. This continued through the Spring 2021 semester, at which point previous CACREP policies were reinstated.

### **Other Program Changes/Events (based on student and faculty feedback, program outcome data, etc.)**

For the 2020-2021 academic year UAB waived the GRE requirement for applicants for graduate programs due to the Covid-19 pandemic which resulted in difficulty in preparing for and scheduling GRE exams. This was also the case for the UAB CP, though other program application requirements remained the same. Based on student and faculty feedback, and due to

Covid-19 precautions, the admissions protocol for the UAB CP continued to take place online with small groups of 4-5 applicants being interviewed by 2-3 faculty members and adjunct faculty (this amended protocol began in Spring 2020).

In response to student feedback and discussions, and created with student input, beginning in Fall 2020-Spring 2021, the Counseling Program offered a program-wide voluntary book club, the Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging Book Social (DIBBS). The aim of this book club was to provide an opportunity for students to explore and discuss multicultural perspectives and topics. This book club was facilitated by Dr. Danielle Pester, a visiting instructor in the CP, and they met biweekly to discuss books that were chosen collectively by participants.

In August 2020 the Community Counseling Clinic (along with all SOE offices) moved into the new Education and Engineering Complex building. Though the CCC continued to offer telehealth-only counseling services through the summer of 2021, most clinic students returned to the office in January 2021 to conduct telehealth sessions, correspond with clients, and receive supervision onsite. Clinic policies, processes, and forms continued to be adjusted to ensure HIPAA-compliance and best practice during this telehealth-only time period. During the 2020-2021 academic year, the Executive Director of the Clinic, Dr. McCarthy, worked with the then-Department Chair of Human Studies, Dr. Plaisance, and Dean Robinson to arrange clinic access/security, clinic furnishings, and clinic recording technology in anticipation of an August 2021 return to full onsite operations. During the 2020-2021 academic year, the above-mentioned individuals collectively worked with UAB Health System Information Services (HSIS) and Information Technology (IT) team members to overhaul the server for clinic recordings to further align with HIPAA best practices and ensure data security.

In response to student feedback, the CP faculty compiled a list of a variety of CPCE study materials used by students to successfully prepare for the CPCE comprehensive exam. Advisors distribute this list to students who ask for assistance identifying preparation materials. In response to new processes and longer waitlists in the Student Counseling Center, and student requests to complete their required 8-session counseling sessions as a client outside of the university, the CP began soliciting and compiling a list of local providers who agreed to provide CP students with discounted or sliding scale services. This list was provided upon request to students/advisees, and provided more options for students to complete their 8 session counseling requirement. The CP also adjusted their requirement to allow video telecounseling to count towards students' 8 session requirement from that point on due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the increased availability and ease of use of this method.

In the 2020-2021 academic year, the UAB CP saw our first external (non degree-seeking students admitted for certificate courses only) CMHC certificate students enrolled. While the CMHC certificate was first offered in the fall of 2019 to CP students enrolled in the MCF and SC concentrations, external counseling students (alums of Counseling Programs) were first admitted

for this certificate in the summer of 2020 and completed their CMHC certificate coursework throughout the 2020-2021 academic year.