

PALM BEACH ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY COUNSELOR EDUCATION PROGRAM

Annual Report 2024-2025

LETTER FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR

For the past 31 years, PBAU's graduate counseling program has provided premiere academic and training experiences for professional counselors in the South Florida region. As mental, emotional, and spiritual difficulties surge across the nation, the counseling faculty have remained passionately committed to equipping counselors-in-training with the most cutting edge, evidence-based practices in the field. To ensure the effectiveness and success of the counseling program, faculty and administrators consistently review and evaluate the program's design and implementation process in relation to its overall objectives and mission.

In effort to safeguard our commitment to the highest standards of student learning, academic excellence, and clinical training, the program pursued and received full accreditation through the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). Additionally, to meet the growing need for training high quality counselors outside of the West Palm Beach area, we have developed a CACREP accredited online counseling track that launched its first cohort in Fall 2025. Despite these exciting and important changes to PBAU's clinical mental health counseling program, we remain committed to our *distinctly Christian and clinically professional* identity.

The achievements of the program are truly the result of team collaboration. Therefore, it is with unending gratitude that I acknowledge the joint efforts of the PBAU Counselor Education Department. Dr. Philip Henry, Dr. Steve Vensel, Dr. Kathryn Iandoli-Bosso, Dr. Ana Jaramillo-Graham, Dr. Joann Kutsukos, Dr. Stephan Brown, Dr. Rachel Heffield, Martha Christlieb, and Grecia Hernandez. As a team, we are grateful for the consistent support and advocacy of our leader and Dean, Dr. Marcia Bedasse.

With gratitude,

Dr. Jeremy Bonta

Assistant Professor of Counseling

Program Director, Counselor Education

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) requires that Counselor Education program faculty disseminate an annual report that includes, by program level, a summary of the program evaluation results, subsequent program modifications, and any other substantial program changes. The report is published on the program website under the Reports tab, and students currently in the program, program faculty, institutional administrators, and personnel in cooperating agencies (e.g., employers, site supervisors) are notified that the report is available. This report serves to provide an overview of the requirements listed above, for the Clinical Mental Health as well an overview of the Counselor Education Program.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Counselor Education Program is to facilitate a holistic educational experience, through which students develop personal and professional qualities, competencies, ethical judgment, and spiritual awareness, as they prepare for professional service in school counseling, clinical mental health counseling, or for advanced study in a related field.

Program Objectives

1. Exhibit proficiency in counseling skills unique to forming and utilizing professional relationships within the context of clinical mental health counseling.
2. Demonstrate knowledge of empirically based strategies to identify ethically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate preventions, interventions, and advocacy to treat mental health issues
3. Develop and demonstrate appropriate professional dispositions expected of counselors.
4. Demonstrate ability to integrate theologically informed and spiritually sensitive interventions in counseling practice when appropriate and desired by clients.
5. Effectively apply clinical mental health counseling knowledge, skills, and dispositions in professional practice.

Program Highlights

Currently Enrolled	252
2024-2025 Graduates	62 successful graduates
Number of Community Partners	150 Sites
Hosted three EMDR Trainings for Students	77 students participated
Hosted Gottman Level 1 Training	35 students participated
Tree of Life Events – Counseling-related trainings and seminars for students	10 events per year, average 75 attendees.

Program Evaluation Results

During fall 2024, spring 2025, and summer 2025 semesters, we obtained direct evidence of student learning and performance from 15 primary sources of assessment:

1. Interview of a Counseling Professional Paper (COU 5413 Foundations of Counseling)
2. Final Paper w/ Video Transcript (COU 5133 Counseling Skills & Characteristics)
3. Personal Theory of Counseling paper (COU 5103 Counseling Theories);
4. Ethical Case Management Paper (COU 5123 Legal and Ethical Issues)
5. Developmental Story Reflection paper. (COU 5003 Human Growth & Development);
6. Faith integration paper (COU 5173 Faith, Spirituality, and Counseling);
7. Case Conceptualization and Treatment Planning Summary (COU 5263 Diagnosis & Treatment Planning)
8. Multicultural Competency Paper (COU 5403 Foundations of Social/Cultural Counseling);
9. Journal Article Critique (COU 5033 Research and Program Evaluation);
10. Psychometric Critique (COU 5023 Assessment & Testing);
11. Career Development Project (COU 5443 Career Development)
12. Group Proposal Project (COU 5113 Group Counseling)
13. Practicum and Internship Field Experience (COU 5703, 5713, 5723) is assessed using the Counselor Competencies Scale (CCS-R) and completed by Site Supervisors;
14. Counselor Preparation Comprehensive Examination (CPCE);
15. Professional Dispositions Competency Assessment (PDCA) completed by faculty at several points throughout the program.

Each KPI is rated on a scale of 1-5. The program benchmark is that student achieve a 4 or higher.

CACREP Standards	Key Performance Indicators
Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practices	Student knowledge and application of professional counseling orientation and ethical practice is measured through personal reflection papers in COU 5123 Legal and Ethical Issues COU 5143 Foundations of Counseling classes. Practicum & Internship site supervisor evaluations also assess student behavior in their clinical practice. Ratings of student knowledge and understanding of Professional Counseling and Ethical Practices is satisfactory.
Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences	Student sensitivity and application of knowledge regarding social and cultural diversity is measured from three sources, a cultural immersion paper in COU 5403 Foundations of Multicultural Counseling, supervisor evaluations of practicum/internship students and faculty evaluations of students using the PDCA-R. Faculty seem to evaluate student knowledge and sensitivity around issues of diversity quite high. Site supervisors rated student clinical performance slightly lower than faculty ratings, though still above our 80% threshold.
Lifespan Development	Student knowledge and awareness of human growth, development, and resilience across the lifespan is assessed the developmental story paper and test scores in COU 5003 Human Growth & Development. Ratings of student knowledge and understanding of Lifespan Development content is satisfactory.
Career Development	Student understanding of strategies for career assessment and career development in treatment planning are measured through a Career Development Activities assignment and a final career development project within the COU 5443 Career Development class. Ratings of student knowledge and understanding of Career Development content are satisfactory.
Counseling Practice and Relationships	Student awareness and implementation of beneficial counseling and helping relationships begins in COU 5133 Counseling Skills and is evidenced by observation and feedback through practicum and internship. Ratings of student knowledge and understanding of Counseling Practice & Relationships content is satisfactory.
Group Counseling and Group Work	Students have four primary experiences relative to group counseling, (1) participating in an on-campus group, (2) student-led group, (3) facilitating a group in internship, and (4) in-class instruction. To measure student understanding of theoretical foundations and therapeutic factors contributing to group effectiveness, students submit a group proposal paper. Also, student proficiency is measured by the PDCA-R in COU 5113 Groups. Ratings of student knowledge

	of group counseling and group facilitation skills appear to be adequate.
Assessment and Diagnostic Processes	In the area of assessment and testing, the knowledge required to evaluate reliability and validity of assessments is observed through the psychometric critique assignment in the COU 5023 Assessment & Testing class and a case conceptualization final assignment submitted in the COU 5263 Diagnosis & Treatment class. The skill of effectively preparing for initial assessment meetings may be demonstrated through the instrument critique in the COU 5023 Assessment and Testing class and practicum/internship supervisor evaluations.
Research and Program Evaluation	A desired outcome in research and program evaluation is that students will be able to explain the importance of research in advancing the counseling profession as well as to effectively use it in informing their counseling practice. These goals are evaluated in a research proposal assignment in the COU 5033 Research and Program Evaluation class (100% across campuses) and in the clinical data section of their CCIP. Student performance appears to be strong in the understanding of clinical research and implications for practice.
Clinical Mental Health Counseling	A standard relative to employing theories and models related to clinical mental health counseling measures student efficacy in this specialty area. Three methods of evaluation are employed, the Personal Theory of Counseling Paper (COU 5103 Counseling Theories), the Theory Paper (COU 5703 Practicum), and Supervisor Evaluations of Interns. This data seems to indicate that our students are effective in applying theories and models of clinical mental health counseling to their understanding of and work with clients.

Student learning is continuously assessed throughout the program using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each PLO. To successfully assess these domains at multiple points in the program, at least two KPIs have been assigned.

Assessment of Program Objectives

The table below provides an overview of the program objectives and the student success rates for each one.

For each of the sub-objectives, a benchmark is set as follows: 95% of all students will attain the minimum percentage score of 80% on each KPI corresponding with the specific sub-objective OR, in case of Likert scale assessments, such as Counseling

Competency Scales-Revised (CCS-R), criteria for success indicate that at least 90% of students are rated as meeting/exceeding expectations on an evaluative tool.

The following is an itemized representation of student performance related to competency in foundational and specialty knowledge base, per the program's learning outcomes.

Program Learning Objectives	Student Proficiency %
Exhibit proficiency in counseling skills unique to forming and utilizing professional relationships within the context of clinical mental health counseling.	88.5%
Demonstrate knowledge of empirically based strategies to identify ethically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate preventions, interventions, and advocacy to treat mental health issues.	92.9%
Develop and demonstrate appropriate professional dispositions expected of counselors.	95%
Demonstrate the ability to integrate theologically informed and spiritually sensitive interventions in counseling practice when appropriate and desired by clients.	100%
Effectively apply clinical mental health counseling knowledge, skills, and dispositions in professional practice.	96.83%

CLINICAL REVIEW

Below are the total number of students registered in practicum and internship for the 2024-2025 academic year:

- **Fall 2024:** 69 students
- **Spring 2025:** 66 students
- **Summer 2025:** 66 students

64 students began clinical internships during the 2024-2025 academic year:

- **Spring 2025** – 38 students
- **Summer 2025**– 26 students

73 students successfully completed their clinical internships during the 2024-2025 academic year.

- **Fall 2024** – 45 students
- **Spring 2025** – 26 students
- **Summer 2025** – 2 students

Site Supervisor Feedback

Counselor Competencies Scale – Revised (CCS-R) assesses the Skills, knowledge, and dispositions across 23 domains, in the counseling setting, at the mid and end points of the practicum and internship experience.

Practicum and Internship instructors review the CCS-R evaluations completed by site supervisors. Information is used during site visits and to help both the student intern and the site supervisor. These reviews take place mid and end of each semester that a student is in practicum and internship.

Feedback from site supervisor CCS-Rs is included in Practicum Orientation meetings to ensure that students are adequately prepared to meet site supervisors' expectations when they are at the sites. Practicum/Internship instructors use the information when

checking in with site supervisors for site visits and ongoing communication regarding student growth and development.

The results below, capture the performance of our students during this assessment period.

Criteria	Exceeds 5	Meets 4	Near 3	Below 2	Harmful 1	Unable to Observe	Mean
Nonverbal Skills - Includes Body Position, Eye Contact, Posture,	61%	36%	1%				4.52
Encouragers - Includes Minimal Encouragers	62%	33%	3%				4.51
Questions - Use of Appropriate Open & Closed Questioning	54%	40%	3%			1	4.39
Reflecting Paraphrasing - Basic Reflection of Content – Paraphrasing, Summarizing, etc.	54%	39%	3%			2	4.32
Reflecting (b) - Reflection of Feelings	58%	35%	2%			3	4.9
Reflecting (c) – Summarizing content, feelings	53%	39%	3%			3	4.3
Advanced Reflection - Advanced Reflection of Feelings, Reflection of Values, Meanings, Core Beliefs	39%	43%	8%			9	3.91
Confrontation - Counselor challenges client to recognize & evaluate inconsistencies.	35%	47%	10%			6	3.93
Goal Setting - Counselor collaborates with client to establish realistic, appropriate, & attainable therapeutic goals	55%	38%	3%			3	4.36
Focus of Counseling - Counselor focuses (or refocuses) client on his/her therapeutic goals	55%	36%	4%			3	4.31
Facilitate Therapeutic Environment (a) - Counselor expresses appropriate empathy & care.	73%	25%					4.65

Facilitate Therapeutic Environment (b) - Counselor expresses appropriate respect & unconditional positive regard	77%	21%					4.69
Professional Ethics - The student adheres to the ethical guidelines of the ACA, ASCA, & IAMFC.	67%	30%	2%				4.61
Professional Behavior – Behaves in professional manner	74%	24%	1%				4.69
Professional & Personal Boundaries - Student recognizes the boundaries of her/his competencies & maintains appropriate boundaries with supervisors, peers, & clients	69%	29%	1%				4.64
Knowledge & Adherence to Site Policies - Student demonstrates an understanding & appreciation for all counseling site policies & procedures	66%	30%	2%				4.56
Record Keeping - Student completes all weekly record keeping activities correctly & promptly	60%	34%	4%				4.48
Multicultural Competencies - Student demonstrated awareness, appreciation, & respect of cultural difference	62%	35%	1%				4.53
Emotional stability & Self-control - Student demonstrates emotional stability in relationships with supervisor, peers, & clients.	70%	27%	1%				4.61
Motivated to Learn & Grow / Initiative - Student is engaged in the learning & development of his/her counseling competencies.	76%	21%	3%				4.73
Openness to Feedback - Student responds non-defensively & alters behavior in accordance with supervisory feedback	75%	23%					4.67
Flexibility & Adaptability - Student demonstrates ability to flex to changing circumstance, unexpected events, & new situations	66%	31%	1%				4.57
Congruence & Genuineness - Student demonstrates self-acceptance	73%	25%					4.65

Programmatic Changes & Modifications

Program modifications have been made with a focus on compliance and growth and informed by data from the following:

- **Institutional/Program Review**
 - Annual PLO Assessment Report
 - APR - Every 8 years
- **State Legislative Review**
 - Florida Board of Clinical Social Work, Marriage & Family Therapy and Mental Health Counseling
- **CACREP Alignment**
 - Continuous review and sustained implementation of standards
- **Modifications to Concentrations:** due to minimal student interest in the School Counseling concentration and the Play Therapy concentration, the faculty voted to remove these concentrations from the course sequence. This change will allow for more focus on developing and enhancing the existing Marriage and Family Counseling concentration and the Crisis and Trauma concentration.

In conclusion, Palm Beach Atlantic Universities Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program remains deeply committed to maintaining the highest standards of quality, rigor, and professional preparation consistent with CACREP expectations and the counseling profession as a whole. We continue to engage in ongoing program evaluation, continuous improvement processes, and responsive curriculum development to ensure that our students are well-prepared for competent, ethical, and culturally responsive practice. Through intentional faculty collaboration, strong alignment with accreditation standards, and a sustained focus on student learning outcomes, we reaffirm our dedication to excellence in counselor education and to the preparation of graduates who are equipped to meet the evolving needs of the individuals and communities they serve.