

# **Rider University Counseling Program Annual Report**

**AY 2023-2024**

This annual report provides information on the following topics: an introduction to and summary of the counseling program; recent efforts related to program evaluation and program modifications; program outcomes; workshops and events; awards and honors; service as editors, on editorial boards, and as reviewers; national, state, and local service; student awards and accomplishments, accreditation and approvals; publications; presentations; and the announcement of a new faculty hire. This report applies to the school counseling and clinical mental health counseling programs. If an assessment or modification is specific to one program, we indicate that in the following report.

## **I. Introduction and Summary**

The Counseling Services Program at Rider University trains students in school counseling and clinical mental health counseling (as part of this clinical mental health counseling degree, students can complete a dance/movement therapy concentration). Our program mission stresses training that is focused on academic rigor in counseling content areas and gains in self-reflection and self- insight. Below is the full text program mission statement from our Program Handbook.

### **MISSION OF RIDER UNIVERSITY COUNSELING SERVICES PROGRAM**

The Rider University Counseling Program provides students with graduate level training in clinical mental health counseling and school counseling. The program also provides concentration training in dance/movement therapy and offers a certificate in coaching. Our program trains students in competencies aligned with the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC), the American Dance Therapy Association (ADTA), and the Center for Credentialing in Education (CCE; Board Certified Coach).

The program subscribes to the developmental-reflective model for professional preparation of counselors. The developmental philosophy recognizes that students enter the program at different levels of experience and expertise. An initial and continuing emphasis in the preparation of counselors is on their intra-personal awareness and their willingness and ability to be reflectively introspective with the goal of continued professional growth.

Located in the northeast region of the United States, the program is committed to working effectively with students of diverse backgrounds in areas such as culture, religion, spirituality, race, ethnicity, language, age, gender identity, sexual identity, ability, and geographical location.

The program provides counselors-in-training with the theoretical understanding of healthy human growth and development. The focus is on the application of mental health, psychological and human development principles through cognitive, affective, behavioral and systemic strategies that address wellness, personal growth and career development as well as pathology.

The program also provides counselors-in-training with strategies to integrate and apply the theoretical knowledge base, current research evidence, and ongoing self-reflective development. Continued active professional development is an ultimate goal.

The counselors-in-training develop a theory-based approach that is congruent with their unique personal qualities. The theory developed includes personal, cultural, social, vocational, psychological, and educational domains.

(Revised September 2021)

## **II. Program Evaluation and Modifications**

Feedback from a range of stakeholders in our program is a core and essential aspect of our process of program evaluation and modification. We seek to improve our program on an ongoing basis via this feedback and subsequent analysis. Below, we provide a summary of recent data collection and review, including program alterations related to this assessment.

### ***A. Faculty program review***

#### *Fall 2023 KPI data review*

Every year, we discuss student performance on key CACREP key performance indicators (KPIs), the comprehensive exam, and the national counselor exam. In Fall 2023, faculty reviewed data for assessments linked to Core 4.F: strategies for career development program planning, organization, implementation, administration, and evaluation and SC 1.D: models of school-based collaboration and consultation.

The Core 4.F standard is associated with our 4th program objective on Career Development; *Students will understand ethical and culturally relevant approaches to career development in a diverse and global economy. Specifically, students will understand and apply theories and models of career development and decision making. Students will identify and use appropriate career assessments, labor information resources and technology in career counseling. Students will understand the interrelationships among and between work, mental well-being, and other life roles and factors.*

Faculty analyzed the scores for measure 1 (a career project and presentation focused on a specific career counseling population) and measure 2 (the career counseling content section of the program comprehensive exam) and determined that scores were acceptable (average score above 2) for both measures. Feedback from students about this career project and presentation for measure 1 was also shared by an instructor—who noted that students often excel on this assignment and instructors have altered due dates to manage the potentially overwhelming nature

of the project. Ultimately, the faculty determined that we are adequately meeting this program objective, based on data from this assessment. The faculty did note that the average score for measure 2 (2.7) was slightly lower than for measure 1 (2.8)—potentially due to the divergent nature of the assessments (i.e., using a class project and/presentation versus a multiple-choice comprehensive exam). Faculty thus discussed a need to review the KPIs and, as we revisit our assessments for adherence to the new CACREP standards, consider making measures more comparable when assessing the same standard (e.g., two project-based assessments or two exam-based assessments).

#### *School counseling program-specific KPI review*

The SC 1.D standard is linked with our first program objective on Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice: *Students will understand the professional functioning of clinical mental health counselors (including clinical mental health counselors with a dance/movement therapy concentration) and school counselors in a multicultural and pluralistic society, including: ethical and legal responsibilities, factors relevant to professional counseling identity (e.g., the importance of advocacy related to the counseling profession and client care, involvement in professional counseling organizations, consultation with peers and colleagues, and understanding of professional credentials and/or licenses relevant to the counselor role), the application of modern technology for appropriate client care, the appropriate modeling of counselor self-care, and the suitable use of supervision.* Specifically, this standard addresses the aspect of the program objective that is pertinent to consultation in school counseling.

Measure 1 is a hypothetical case study in a beginning school counseling class, wherein students review and role play aspects of collaboration and consultation related to this case. Measure 2 is a collaboration and consultation presentation and report, wherein students present a case study of a client at their internship site, including information on referral procedures and a team consultation summary report. Average scores across measure 1 (2.02) and measure 2 (2.72) were acceptable. Faculty noted that average scores increased from measure 1 to measure 2, indicating student gains in knowledge and skill in this area. Faculty determined that we are adequately meeting relevant program objective aims via this assessment. Moreover, faculty discussed that these measures are strong examples of the type of KPI assessment that may be the most useful in our program review—two case study-based projects that move from a hypothetical case in an introductory class to an actual client case in a fieldwork class. Such an assessment model may enable us to more effectively monitor student progress.

#### *Spring 2024 NCE and CPCE data review*

In Spring 2024, faculty reviewed NCE and CPCE data. Faculty noted that students overall are scoring adequately on the CPCE and NCE. There were several content areas on the CPCE which

we want to continue to monitor: assessment and testing, social and cultural diversity, group counseling and group work, as scores were somewhat lower in those domains in a recent test cycle. However, the small sample size of some test data may play a role in these scores, in addition to the post-pandemic changes with students and our program's removal of the GRE as an admission requirement.

The faculty plan to continue reviewing student scores—paying specific attention to the three areas noted above— as we seek to determine if this is an ongoing trend and if program modifications need to be made. We will also continue our practice of alerting students to the professional tutoring resource we successfully advocated for at Rider several years ago; this tutor can assist students with NCE and CPCE exam preparation. All students in Internship II are alerted to this tutoring resource and we also consistently work to identify students throughout the program who may struggle on exams and inform them about this resource.

#### *Advisory Board Meeting Spring 2024*

In April 2024, the program held an advisory board meeting to gather feedback from various stakeholders about the strengths and areas for growth in our counselor training program. The advisory board meeting was held on zoom and included full time faculty, part-time faculty, graduates, current students, and site supervisors. In this meeting, we reviewed the revised program objectives with the advisory board (these objectives were revised based on stakeholder feedback several years ago). We also discussed modifications we had made in our program related to prior stakeholder feedback.

At this meeting we also asked for specific feedback on the strengths and areas for improvement in both our school counseling and clinical mental health counseling programs, as related to our program objectives and training curriculum. In Fall 2024, the faculty plan to review the feedback from this meeting and determine potential next steps related to program modifications. Moreover, the feedback from this advisory board meeting will be used to design a survey we send to site supervisors, graduates, and employers, on a regular schedule, wherein we ask specific questions of these stakeholders related to how well we are meeting our program objectives.

### **III. Program Outcomes**

The data below covers the Summer 2023, Fall 2023, and Spring 2024 semesters in almost all cases. Employment data covers the Spring 2023, Summer 2023, and Fall 2023 semesters. Students currently enrolled data is updated to the current Fall 2024 semester.

MA CMHC Program: 60-65 credits\*

- Students currently enrolled: 141
- Students graduated in past year: 32
- Completion rate: 100%
- NCE pass rate: 83%
- Job placement rate: 100%

MA COUN Program: 48-60 credits\*\*

- Students currently enrolled: 23
- Students graduated in past year: 8
- Completion rate: 100%
- Job placement rate: 100%

*\*Students enrolled in the MA CMHC program (with a DMT concentration) complete 65 credits as of students starting in Fall 2022 or later and/or students starting internship in summer 2023 or later; students enrolled in the MA CMHC program (without a DMT concentration) complete 60 credits.*

*\*\*This program transitioned to 60-credits for all students who started the program after 7.1.23.*

#### **IV. Workshops and Events**

- Juleen Buser and Terry Pertuit presented a program on *Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse: The Role of Teachers* to student teachers at Rider University in Fall 2023.
- Terry Pertuit and Bill Sterner presented a program on *Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse: The Role of Teachers* to student teachers at Rider University in Spring 2024.
- In April 2024, the Rider chapter of the Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Honor Society held their annual induction ceremony.
- Juleen Buser presented a program titled *Coping for wellness: Managing stress and promoting self-acceptance* to students at Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart. A Rider counseling program graduate, Valentina Ezra, LPC, MA, NCC, is a school counselor at Stuart Country Day School.

#### **V. Awards and Honors**

- Yi-Ju Cheng was awarded a Spring 2025 Research Leave from Rider University for a project titled *Exploring the importance of theoretical orientations in play therapy*.

#### **VI. Service as Editors, on Editorial Boards, and as Reviewers**

- Juleen Buser, editorial board member for *Journal of Counseling and Development*
- Yi-Ju Cheng, editorial board member for *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*

- Yi-Ju Cheng, editorial board member for *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy*
- Yi-Ju Cheng, reviewer for *Play Therapy Magazine*
- Eri Millrod, ad hoc reviewer for *Arts in Psychotherapy*
- Eri Millrod, ad hoc reviewer for *Body, Movement, and Dance in Psychotherapy*

## **VII. National, State, and Local Service**

- *Association for Play Therapy*, Research Committee, Yi-Ju Cheng, Committee Chair
- *New Jersey Association for Play Therapy*, Yi-Ju Cheng, President
- *American Dance Therapy Association*, Education Committee, Eri Millrod
- *North Carolina Association for Marriage and Family Therapy*, Continuing Education Chair, Tiffany Rikard

## **VIII. Student Awards and Accomplishments**

- Leslie Ferrari and Timothy Collins were the co-recipients of the James P. Murphy Award for Humanistic Counseling. In memory of Dr. James P. Murphy, beloved teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend, this award is awarded once a year to a graduating Rider University counseling student(s) who exemplifies the characteristics of a person-centered professional counselor: Warmth, empathy, unconditional positive regard, and genuineness, as determined by the counseling faculty.
- Traven Harris, Julia O'Brien, and Lauren Dunmyer were co-recipients of the Lincoln Scott Walter Award. This award goes to the graduating counseling student(s) who shows outstanding contributions to and academic record in the counseling program
- Michala Glassman presented at The Eastern Psychological Association 2024 Conference

## **IX. Accreditations and Approvals**

- The MA Counseling Services program (school counseling concentration) was approved by the New Jersey Department of Education.

## **X. Publications**

- Cheng, Y., Chung, C., & Tsai, M. (in press). Understanding the ACT limit setting of child-centered play therapy through the lens of polyvagal theory. *Journal of Taiwan Play Therapy*.
- Cheng, Y., & Ray, D. C. (in press). Group play therapy. In D. Crenshaw, A. Stewart, and D. Ray (Eds.), *Play therapy: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Guilford.

- Ray, D. C., Ogawa, Y., & Cheng, Y. (2024). Group play therapy supervision: Integrating the powers of play and group. In A. A. Drewes and J. A. Mullen (Eds.), *Supervision can be playful: Techniques for child and play therapist supervisors* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Rowman.
- Millrod, E. (2024). Movement based experiential learning in dance/movement therapy graduate education: Facilitating and hindering factors for competency development. *Body, Movement, and Dance in Psychotherapy*, 1-17.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17432979.2024.2339877>

## **XI. Presentations**

- Cheng, Y. (2024, April). *Child-centered group play therapy*. A 12-hour workshop invited by the Center for Play Therapy, virtual.
- Cheng, Y. (2024, February). *Nuts and bolts of group work with children and adolescents*. Keynote presentation at the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling annual conference, virtual.
- Cheng, Y. J., Buser, J. K., & Pertuit, T. L. (2023, October). *Job search experiences of international counseling doctoral students in the U.S.* Poster presented at the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision conference, Denver, CO.

## **XII. Faculty Hire**

We are excited to welcome a new full time Counseling Program faculty member to our program in Fall 2024. Dr. Christina Devereaux joins us as a tenure-track faculty and comes to us with specialized expertise in dance/movement therapy, in addition to a strong background in counseling skills and theories.

## **XIII. Conclusion**

We consistently strive to improve our counseling program and maintain accreditation via feedback from various stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, graduates, employers, and site supervisors. We aim to work as a collaborative faculty team to deliver high quality and academically rigorous counseling training. We also focus on developing competencies in student dispositions, such as professionalism and self-reflection, and strive to create a student-centered learning environment.