

Rider University Counseling Program Annual Report AY 2024-2025

The 2024-2025 annual report provides an overview of the Counseling Program, focusing on various points of program evaluation and discussing modifications to our program. This report also reviews our program outcomes, summarizes faculty and student activities and accomplishments, and provides program updates. The school counseling and clinical mental health counseling programs are pertinent to this report; program-specific evaluation and modifications will be noted as such.

I. Introduction and Summary

The Counseling 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:

We regularly solicit and review feedback from multiple stakeholders in our program evaluation process. Our goal is to continuously improve our program via various points of evaluation—making program modifications as needed based on stakeholder feedback.

In the following section, we summarize data collection and review processes during AY 2024-2025, specifying changes we made to our program based on these analyses.

A. Faculty program review

Fall 2024 Review of Advisory Board Meeting Feedback

In Fall 2024, the program faculty reviewed the advisory board meeting feedback. This advisory board meeting was held in Spring 2024 and focused on gathering feedback from faculty, students, graduates, and site supervisors related to program strengths and areas for improvement as related to meeting our program objectives.

Our program objectives (which were revised after a prior stakeholder meeting) were shared and discussed at this meeting. Advisory board members agreed with our program objectives and the modifications made based on prior feedback.

School Counseling Program Feedback

Feedback about the school counseling program highlighted the strength of our training in trauma. Our program will continue to emphasize training in trauma by requiring all students to take a course in trauma as of Fall 2025.

Areas for improvement centered on adding school counseling content to core counseling courses. To address this, we discussed that all faculty should be explicitly covering this in their courses and noted ways this could be achieved (e.g., case studies). We also added material to our adjunct orientation session to emphasize this to ensure that adjunct instructors are also intentionally covering relevant school counseling issues in their courses. Some advisory board feedback also discussed the current trend of a wellness room in school counseling; we will add discussion of this trend to the EDSO 502 course.

CMHC program feedback

Feedback related to the CMHC program also underscored the strength of our training in trauma. We will continue to accentuate training in trauma by requiring CMHC students to take a course in trauma as of Fall 2025; for students enrolled in the DMT concentration within the CMHC

program, the CNDT 791 course integrates trauma content. Other noted program strengths were our prerequisites required by students before fieldwork (e.g., the COUN 550 class), various credentials students can pursue while getting their MA degree, site collaboration, and training in theories.

An area of growth pertained to student writing competency and correct use of APA style. Faculty discussed ways to support students in this area. The following program changes and initiatives were outlined: (a) faculty who have assignments that require APA style will consider increasing the amount of the grade that is based on APA style; (b) at the time of orientation every semester, students will be required to attend an APA style workshop (the first workshop was held in January 2025).

Another area of growth focused on student competency in treatment planning and case notes. Faculty discussed being intentional to introduce these competencies earlier in the program (before fieldwork) and decided to add a focus on treatment planning and case notes to COUN 508 and EDSO 502. In addition, faculty discussed feedback related to students needing increased competency in conceptualizing client concerns through a theoretical lens—and needing to gain this skill prior to fieldwork courses. The faculty decided to create a sub-committee to focus on this issue and determine where such material can be added in the curriculum. Two faculty members joined this sub-committee and presented recommendations to the faculty for courses where this content could be added. Specifically, faculty discussed adding this content to assignments in Human Growth and Development and Tests and Measurements, wherein students are explicitly asked to conceptualize client concerns through a theoretical lens/framework.

Related to other areas of feedback, the faculty discussed adding more information on levels of care and insurance authorization management to the COUN 508 course.

This advisory board feedback is pertinent to our survey of site supervisors, graduates, and employers. We plan to send out this survey in Spring 2026 and are currently in the process of designing this survey, using advisory board feedback to inform our questions.

Fall 2024 Demographic Data Review

Faculty reviewed demographic data (starting in Fall 2020) for applicants, enrolled students, and program graduates. Across all categories, we noted trends such as an increase in ethnic diversity, predominantly individuals identifying as female, mainly individuals under age 30, and individuals primarily from NJ and PA.

The faculty engage in existing recruitment and retention efforts in our program, such as regular workshops we present to the Rider University undergraduate population and highlighting program ambassadors on our website, which we will continue. Moreover, the faculty meet on a

regular schedule to share and discuss teaching strategies—to ensure relevance for student training in working with a range of client populations.

Issues related to international students were also discussed. Our program is recognized by IRCEP (we note this on our website) and one of our program faculty (Dr. Cheng) was recently highlighted by IRCEP for her work related to play therapy training for professionals in China: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DKdxhRHOYXK/?igsh=MTlwZWloc2J2cmg5NA==>

To determine potential changes in recruitment or retention efforts, a subcommittee was formed to explore this issue. This committee is currently working to determine recommendations to the faculty for next steps.

Fall 2024 KPI data review

We reviewed student performance on key CACREP key performance indicators (KPIs) in Fall 2024. Specifically, we focused on data for assessments linked to Core 7.G. and Core 8.I.

The Core 7.G standard references student competency in “statistical concepts, including scales of measurement, measures of central tendency, indices of variability, shapes and types of distributions, and correlations.” It is relevant to our 7th program objective: *“Students will demonstrate the knowledge of the development of assessments, including the historical perspectives concerning the meaning of testing and assessment, basic statistical concepts, assessment scores, and methods and sources of assessment. Students will develop the knowledge, competency, and skills of selecting, administering, and interpreting appropriate formal and informal assessments with diverse clients for screening, diagnostic, and intervention planning purposes in a variety of settings.”*

Measure 1 for this KPI is in the Tests and Measurements course (average score = 2.67). The faculty member teaching this course indicated that the current use of the average of the midterm and final exam scores has been a better measure of student knowledge (versus only using the midterm exam). Measure 2 for this KPI is the assessment domain in the program comprehensive exam (average score = 2.5). Faculty review determined that students are performing adequately on this KPI and thus meeting our program objective.

The Core 8.I standard references student competency in “analysis and use of data in counseling” and is relevant to our 8th program objective: *“Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic statistics and types of research, and effectively critique and use existing research for counseling practice. Students will apply basic data analysis techniques and research designs in conducting surveys, evaluating programs and practices, and conducting needs assessments.”*

Measure 1 for this KPI (average score = 2.81) is an assignment in the Introduction to Research class. Measure 2 for this KPI (average score = 2.64) is the research content areas of the program

comprehensive exam. Faculty review determined that students are performing adequately on this KPI and thus meeting our program objective. However, faculty discussed a decrease in student scores after the measure 1 assessment was modified in Fall 2023 and discussed areas where faculty are seeing students experience some challenges with this assignment. The altered course assignment is a student research proposal project and the evaluation emphasizes writing competency and APA style. The faculty member teaching this course underscored student difficulty with APA style and highlighted a range of supports in this course related to this assignment. This APA style issue was also raised in the advisory board meeting feedback and we made program changes to offer students consistent and additional training and support in APA style.

Spring 2025 NCE and CPCE data review

In Spring 2025, faculty reviewed NCE and CPCE data. Overall, faculty determined that students are performing adequately on these exams and discussed recent score improvements for both exams. Certain CPCE specific domains (assessment and testing, social and cultural diversity, group counseling and group work) that were noted as being somewhat lower in our last review cycle were noted as being higher in the more recent test cycles

The program various initiatives in place to support student success on the CPCE and NCE exams: (a) identifying students who may struggle on exams and being sure they are specifically aware of the professional tutoring resource they can access at Rider; (b) alerting all Internship II students to this tutoring resource during the semester they take the exams; and (c) holding other program wide events to support student preparation for exams. In regard to the latter, the professional counseling program tutor held a CPCE/NCE preparation workshop open to all students in the past and plans to hold another event in Fall 2025. We plan to offer this workshop every Fall and Spring semester moving forward. We also plan to request regular reports from the campus tutoring center to track student use of this resource.

B. Other program modifications

As noted above, a course in trauma will be required for all school counseling and clinical mental health counseling students as of Fall 2025, given consistent feedback from multiple stakeholders on the vital nature of this training. In order to preserve two elective choices for students in the CMHC program, we removed CNPY 516 Advanced Psychopathology as a course requirement for CMHC students. The COUN 508 course covers CACREP-required content that is also covered in CNPY 516; this material will now be covered in additional depth in COUN 508, given this change. We also added some elective options for students, e.g., courses in sport counseling and qualitative research for school counseling and CMHC students and courses in instructional supervision for school counseling students.

III. Program outcomes:

The data below covers the Summer 2024, Fall 2024, and Spring 2025 semesters in almost all cases. Employment data covers the Spring 2024, Summer 2024, and Fall 2024 semesters. Students currently enrolled data is updated to the current Fall 2025 semester.

MA CMHC Program: 60-65 credits*

- Students currently enrolled: 171
- Students graduated in past year: 30
- Completion rate: 97%
- NCE pass rate: 90%
- Job placement rate: 100%

MA COUN Program: 48-60 credits**

- Students currently enrolled: 28
- Students graduated in past year: 5
- 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 July 1, 2023.*

IV. Workshops and Events

- **Juleen Buser** presented a session on *Coping for wellness: Managing stress and promoting self-acceptance*, at Stuart Country Day School of the Sacred Heart (S 2025)
- **Christina Devereaux**. Expressive Arts Healing Workshop: Dance/Movement Therapy. Swarthmore College. Swarthmore, PA (Serving Survivors of Sexual Abuse in partnership with Delaware County Victim Assistance Center and Swarthmore College) (S 2025)
- **Christina Devereaux** (2024, November 16). Expressive Arts Healing Workshop: Dance/Movement Therapy. Swarthmore College. Swarthmore, PA (Serving Survivors of Sexual Abuse in partnership with Delaware County Victim Assistance Center and Swarthmore College).
- **Christina Hamme Peterson** ran a workshop on *Keeping Yourself Safe* for students in grades 1 and 5, Goodnoe Elementary School Council Rock School District (S 2025)

- **Eri Millrod** ran a workshop on *Breathing and Movement Exercises to Manage Stress and Anxiety* for the Business Living and Learning Community's peer mentors, Ziegler Hall residents and students (Fall 2024)
- In April 2025, the Counseling Program held an induction ceremony for the Rider University chapter of the Chi Sigma Iota honor society, under the leadership of faculty co-advisor **Dr. Tiffany Rikard** and the honor society officers.
- In April 2024, **Dr. Terry Pertuit** held a mini conference event which showcased the knowledge and skills of students in the COUN 508 classes, who presented workshops on a variety of counseling topics.
- **Terry Pertuit** and **William Sterner** co-presented Child Abuse Reporting Workshop for students in the Teacher Education Program (Fall 2024; Spring 2025)
- **Terry Pertuit** presented a talk on mental health and social justice titled "*Fostering Safe Spaces for Dialogue*" and served as both a panelist and moderator for the Multicultural Studies Program's 26th Annual Unity Day Celebration at Rider University (Fall 2024).
- **Yi-Ju Cheng** ran a workshop on *Introduction to Play Therapy* for prospective graduate students and Rider undergrad students, Admissions Office at Rider (Fall 2024).
- **Marion Rogers** provided the following trainings for the New Jersey Development Corporation: (1) (2025, August). *Substance Use*, (2) (2025, May). *Annual human sexuality training*, (3) (April, 2025). *Annual human sexuality training*, (4) (2025, February). *Annual human sexuality training*, (5) (2025, January). *Suicide prevention training*.

V. Awards and Honors

- **Terry Pertuit** was awarded a Spring 2026 Research Leave from Rider University for a project titled: *The Intersection of Trauma and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD): Impact on School Functioning and Help-Seeking Patterns in Low-Income, First-Generation High School Students*
- **Juleen Buser** was awarded a 2025 Rider University Summer Research Fellowship for a project titled: *Spirituality and Body Image among Black Women*.
- **Yi-Ju Cheng** was the recipient of the 2025 Association for Play Therapy Emerging Leader Service Award. This was announced in the April 15th, 2025 *Play Today*, and in the June 2025 *Play TherapyTM* magazine
- **Yi-Ju Cheng** was awarded a Spring 2025 Research Leave from Rider University for a project titled: *The Importance of Theoretical Orientation in Play Therapy: A Delphi Study*.
- **Christina Devereaux** was awarded a 2025 Rider University Summer Research Fellowship for a project titled: *Exploring Linguistic Mediation and Embodied Immediacy in Dance/Movement Therapy Skills Training in China*
- **William Sterner**, Outstanding Professional Leader of the Year Award (2025), Mediterranean Region Counseling Association

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

- *American Journal of Dance Therapy*, Christina Devereaux (Past Editor and Editorial Review Board)

- *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, Christina Devereaux (Reviewer and International Advisory Panel)
- *Counseling Outcome Research and Evaluation*, Christina Hamme Peterson (Editorial Board Member)
- *Creative Arts in Education and Therapy*, Christina Devereaux (Editorial Review Board)
- *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, Yi-Ju Cheng (Editorial Board Member)
- *Journal of Counseling and Development*, Juleen Buser (Editorial Board Member)
- *Journal of Counselor Leadership and Advocacy*, Yi-Ju Cheng (Editorial Board Member)
- *Play Therapy Magazine*, Yi-Ju Cheng, (Reviewer)
- *Quality of Life Research*, Christina Hamme Peterson (Reviewer)
- *The Arts in Psychotherapy*, Christina Devereaux (Reviewer)
- *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, Eri Millrod (Reviewer)
- *Career Development Quarterly*, William Sterner (Editorial Board Member)
- *The Family Journal* (Editorial Board Member, Terry Pertuit)
- *Journal of School-Based Counseling Policy and Evaluation* (Editorial Board Member, Terry Pertuit)
- *Family Sciences Journal* (Editorial Board Member, Terry Pertuit)

VII. National, State, and Local Service

- *American Dance Therapy Association Education Committee, Approved Programs*, Eri Millrod (Rider University representative)
- *American Dance Therapy Association Committee on Approval*, Christina Devereaux
- *Association for Play Therapy (Spring 2022-Present)*, Research Committee, Yi-Ju Cheng (Committee Chair)
- *Middle States Commission on Higher Education External Evaluator*, Christina Hamme Peterson (Self-Study Team Member)
- *New Jersey Association for Play Therapy*, Yi-Ju Cheng (President, Summer 2024-Spring 2025)

VIII. Student Awards and Accomplishments

- **Younok Dumortier Shin and Cam Murray** 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.
- **Jenna Atkinson and Lisa Then** 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

IX. Accreditation and Certification Reports

- **New Jersey Department of Education.**
 - School Counseling Program Revision. Juleen Buser and Terry Pertuit (leads)
 - Student Assistance Coordinator Program Revision. Juleen Buser and Terry Pertuit (leads)

X. Publications

- **Buser, J. K.** (2024). Coaching interventions for body dissatisfaction: Preventing eating disorder symptoms. *Philosophy of Coaching: An International Journal*, 9(2), 34-46.
- **Cheng, Y.**, Chung, C., & Tsai, M. (2024). 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. (2025). Group play therapy. In D. Crenshaw, A. Stewart, and D. Ray (Eds.), *Play therapy: A comprehensive guide to theory and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 207-219). Guilford.
- **Devereaux, C.** (2024). Book Review: Dance/movement therapy for infants and young children with medical illness: Treating somatic and psychic distress: by Suzi Tortora and Miri Keren, New York, NY, Routledge, 2023, 224 pp., £23.99 (paperback), £96.00 (hardback), £23.99 (ebook). ISBN: 9780367352608. *Body, Movement and Dance in Psychotherapy*, 19(4), 412–415.

XI. Presentations

- **Cheng, Y.** (2024, December). *Child-centered play therapy 101 & 102*. Invited and conducted a 30-hour virtual workshop. Jian Geng Education and Technology Co. Ltd, Beijing, China.
- **Cheng, Y.**, & Ray, D. (2025, April). *Child-centered group play therapy*. A 12-hour workshop invited by the Center for Play Therapy, virtual.
- **Devereaux, C.** (2025, April). *Brain, Body and Beyond: Examining Evidence-Based Practice with Practice-Based Evidence in Dance/Movement Therapy*. CAET World Summit 2025: Creative & Expressive Arts Therapy. International Association for Creative Arts in Education and Therapy. (Invited)
- **Devereaux, C.** (2025, June 15). *Dance/Movement Therapy and Autism Spectrum Disorders: The Moving Relationship*. 10th Anniversary Celebration of Hong Kong Dance/Movement Therapy Association. (Invited)
- Fontanesi, C., Kawano, T., Allen, L., Blanc, V., **Millrod, E.**, Cruz, R., Barnstaple, R., Stewart, C., & **Devereaux, C.** (2024, October). *Online Synchronous vs. In-person Learning: Preliminary Explorations by the Education Committee and Research & Practice Committee*. American Dance Therapy Association 59th Annual Conference. Chicago, IL.

- Peterson, N.A., Powell, K.G., Morton, C.M., **Peterson, C.H.**, Litterer, D., & Hallcom, D.K. (2025, July). *Empowerment in grassroots community coalitions: Development of an instrument*. Presentation at the International Society of Critical Health Psychology, Galway, Ireland.
- **Sterner, W. R.** (2025, March). The counselor's role in implementing clinical approaches: Competencies, creativity, and considerations. Keynote address presented at the 2025 Mediterranean Region-Counseling Association, Poznan, Poland.
- Shoemaker, K. & **Pertuit, T. L.** (2024, September 26--29). Teaching counseling theory to students through a trauma-informed lens. North Atlantic Region Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, Atlantic City, NJ, United States.
- **Pertuit, T. L.** & Shoemaker, K. (2024, September 26--29). Suicidal ideation in marginalized populations: Models of supervision. North Atlantic Region Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, Atlantic City, NJ, United States. <https://north-atlantic-association-for-counselor-education-and-supervis.ce-go.com/naraces-2024-conference/agenda>

XII. Faculty Hire

Dr. Tiffany Rikard has accepted a position as a tenure-track faculty member in our program, as of Fall 2025. We are excited to welcome her to this new role!

XIII. Conclusion

As a counselor education program, we aim to train students to be excellent professionals in the counseling field. We work to maintain our accreditation, focus on academically rigorous coursework, and attend to student dispositional competencies, such as the capacity for self-insight and reflection. We regularly seek input from a range of stakeholders so that we can modify our program as needed—to ensure we are training students in current and effective practices in the field for optimal client care.