



Community Counseling Master's Program



Department of Counseling
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Applicant Information Packet

(Revised Spring, 2008 Semester)

Program Mission

The Community Counseling Program has as its mission world class graduate-level training in the art and science of mental health in order to produce Professional Counselors/Professional Clinical Counselors who effectively enhance the lives of individuals, groups, and communities.

Professional Counseling is defined by the American Counseling Association (1997) as "the application of mental health, psychological, or human development principles, through cognitive, affective, behavioral or systematic intervention strategies, that address wellness, personal growth, or career development, as well as pathology." **Community Counseling** is a professional counseling specialty that is defined as "a comprehensive helping framework . . . that promotes the personal development and well-being of all individuals and communities" (Lewis et al., 2003). Therefore, as opposed to other mental health professions, community counseling stresses the surrounding community's impact (including culture, social history, and group influences) on mental health. Advocacy, social justice, consultation, and community wellness are therefore part of community counselors' identity. As Professional Counselors/Professional Clinical Counselors, community counselors usually work clinically with individuals and groups (often including couples/families). However, community counselors may also use their roles as advocates and consultants to positively impact the surrounding community, thereby ultimately promoting the wellness of both clients as and society in general.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

The Community Counseling Program aims to prepare students as effective professional counselors using a community counseling philosophy/identity. It is expected that graduates from the Community Counseling Program will have gained: (1) a **professional identity** founded on human growth/wellness from a holistic perspective, (2) **knowledge** about bio-psycho-social causes of client distress and social/occupational impairments, (3) **skills** related to the enhancement of human development as well as the treatment of psychopathology, and (4) **confidence/competence** related to improving one's community through individual, group, and societal advocacy and outreach. In this regard, the Community

Counseling Program is designed to foster the following educational and professional objectives among its students:

- A community counselor identity
- Knowledge of specialty counseling areas unique to community counselors – for example, advocacy, social justice, and community consultation
- Knowledge of core counseling areas – for example, human growth and development, social/cultural foundations, helping relationships and professional orientation, theories of counseling and group work, career and lifestyle development, tests and appraisal, research and program evaluation
- Ethical and professional decision-making skills
- Clinical skills leading to State licensure
- Self-awareness and personal growth

Placement Objectives for Graduates

The Community Counseling Program prepares students to gain the Ohio Professional Counselor/Professional Clinical Counselor license. Depending upon each student's interests/specialty areas, graduates will have the opportunity to work clinically with children, adolescents, and adults. Graduates will be prepared to work with individuals (one-on-one), groups, and communities (through consultation and advocacy). Professional Counselors/Professional Clinical Counselors may also treat couples/families if education/supervised training has been received in that area. However, the primary client populations focused on in the Community Counseling Program are individuals, groups, and communities.

As community counselors, graduates are often employed by a community mental health agency. In this regard, graduates may work in outpatient, partial hospitalization, long-term residential, or inpatient settings. Graduates may also join or develop their own private practice in their community. Finally, graduates may gain employment in an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) focused on improving the occupational/personal lives of individuals at specific work settings.

Program Details

The Community Counseling Program is CACREP accredited and is approved by the Ohio Counselor and Social Worker Board as meeting the educational and experiential requirements for professional licensure in Ohio. Graduates obtain Professional Counselor (PC)/Professional Clinical Counselor (PCC) licensure. The Community Counseling Program consists of 60 graduate semester credits. Foundation courses in theories of counseling, counseling techniques, human development across the lifespan, multicultural issues in counseling, individual assessment, and individual/group counseling procedures prepare students as helping professionals. Students also learn specialized clinical skills in diagnosis, personality evaluation, treatment planning, and treatment of mental/emotional disorders from a bio-psycho-social perspective.

Student enrollment has remained steady or increased over the past five years, reflecting the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' (2006) report projecting faster than average job growth in the counseling profession through at least 2014. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2006) rapid job growth for mental

health/community counselors is due to increasing demand and because "insurance companies are increasingly providing reimbursement of counselors as a less costly alternative to psychiatrists and psychologists." Job growth in Ohio is expected to parallel this national trend. Mental health/community counselor was ranked 33 among the best jobs in America by Money Magazine (2006).

Application Procedures

Applicants are admitted to the Community Counseling Program on a competitive basis according to qualifications and number of applicants. In order to maintain quality instruction/training/advising new admissions are usually limited to 15-20 students per semester. **New students are admitted to the Community Counseling Program both Fall and Spring semesters on a rolling basis (i.e., first come, first interviewed with no formal admission deadlines).** Applicants are encouraged to complete their application materials early, before admission limits have been reached.

- An applicant may only apply to one master's degree program per semester. Before course registration may begin students must have earned a bachelor's degree from a recognized/accredited institution. To be fully admitted, applicants must have at least a 2.75 cumulative grade point average (GPA) for all undergraduate coursework OR at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA for the last 64 credits of undergraduate coursework. To be provisionally admitted applicants must have an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.5.
- The following materials must be included in master's degree application packets: (1) a completed University of Akron Graduate School application form, (2) official undergraduate transcripts, (3) a Department of Counseling application supplement form, and (4) three letters of reference using standard Department of Counseling reference forms.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT APPLICANTS must also submit (5) official TOEFL scores as part of their application materials.

- The main Graduate School application (#1 above) can be completed online through the 'Apply Online' link on the Graduate School's website:

<http://www.uakron.edu/gradsch/>

Other application materials (#2-4 above) can be found on the following Department of Counseling website:

<http://www.uakron.edu/colleges/educ/Counseling/admission.php>

- All printed application materials should be sent to the following location:

**ATTN: Admissions Applications
Graduate School, The University of Akron
469 Polsky Building
Akron, OH 44325-2101 (USA)**

Additional Information

To speak with a faculty member about program-related questions, please contact Dr. Robert Schwartz (Program Coordinator) at **330-972-8155** or rsc@uakron.edu.

To speak with a Department of Counseling representative, please contact Ms. Janice Vaughn at **330-972-7779** or jvaughn@uakron.edu.

Frequently Asked Questions

What materials do I need to apply for the Community Counseling Master's Program?

Before a new student may begin graduate-level coursework, he/she must have earned a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution. To gain 'full' admission applicants must have received at least a 2.75 cumulative GPA for all undergraduate coursework, OR at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA for the last 64 credits of undergraduate coursework. To gain 'provisional' admission applicants must have received an undergraduate GPA of at least 2.5 or better. In addition to official undergraduate transcripts (stating the applicant's GPA and bachelor's degree received), application packets must include: (1) a Department of Counseling application supplement form, and (2) three letters of reference on Department of Counseling reference forms. Once all application materials have been received/reviewed, applicants will be contacted for a face-to-face or phone interview. All application materials, including the personal interview, will be considered during the program's acceptance process. International student applicants must also submit official TOEFL scores as part of their application materials.

Where do I send my application materials?

All application materials should be sent to The University of Akron Graduate School at the following mailing address:

Graduate School
The University of Akron
469 Polsky Building
Akron, OH 44325-2101 (USA)

Where can I find the application forms and the mailing addresses to send them?

All application forms can be found on the '[Master's Degree Admission Requirements and On-Line Application Forms](#)' website:

<http://www.uakron.edu/colleges/educ/Counseling/admission.php>

When are application materials due?

New students are admitted to the Community Counseling Master's Program both Fall and Spring semesters. The program offers rolling admissions. There are no deadlines to apply (i.e., first come, first interviewed with no formal admission deadlines). Applicants are encouraged to complete their application materials early, before admission limits have been reached. We strongly encourage applicants to submit all application materials at least two months prior to the semester they wish to begin.

What can I expect during the application process?

The Program Coordinator will review each applicant's admission materials once they are received by the Department of Counseling. Then, a faculty member will contact each applicant to schedule a face-to-face or phone interview. The University of Akron's Community Counseling program is one of only a few programs that interviews all applicants meeting the minimum application requirements. We strongly believe that it is important to speak to and learn about each applicant in person (beyond what is written on paper). This also provides applicants with the opportunity to ask questions of their own, and to make sure that the program will fit their professional goals.

How many students are accepted into the Community Counseling program, and what types of students usually enter the program?

Approximately 20-30 students are accepted to the program annually - approximately 10-15 each Fall and Spring semester. The Admissions Committee attempts to maintain a small cohort of students accepted each semester in order to provide individualized attention and a positive learning experience for each student. Students in the Community Counseling program range in age from early to older adulthood (average age approximately 25-30 years old). The majority of student in the program live in or near the Greater Akron area. However, students are from a variety of cultural backgrounds (Euro-American, African-American, Asian-American) and the program is known for accepting international students from a variety of countries (e.g., South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Nigeria, and European countries). The program encourages applications from diverse student populations and actively attempts to mentor students from underserved ethnic cultures.

How are admission decisions made?

The primary goal of the Admissions Committee is to choose students who have the potential to become successful community counselors. Therefore, admission decisions are made by considering (a) the applicant's GPA, (b) recommendation letters from past employers and professors, (c) the applicant's statement of intent and professional goals (listed on the application supplement form), and (d) interactions during the interview process. Each of the four areas above are considered during the application process. Although admission is competitive, it is our intention to give all qualified applicants (until enrollment limits are reached) the opportunity to serve society as community counselors.

How long does the Community Counseling program take to complete and can I attend part-time?

The program consists of 60 semester credits, and the average student attends the program for 2-1/2 years before graduating. It is possible to complete the program in 2 years if one is continually registered for courses full-time, including Summer semesters. However, most students take slightly longer than 2 years. Students may attend the program full-time or part-time and may take any number of credits desired each semester. Students who work part-time while taking coursework may attend the program for 3 – 3-1/2 years.

How long can I take to complete Community Counseling Master's Program?

The Graduate School allows master's degree students a total of 6 years to complete their degree.

Can I transfer credits from other programs/universities into the Community Counseling Master's Program?

The Graduate School allows master's degree students to transfer graduate credits equaling up to 1/3 of their total program credits. Since the Community Counseling program is 60 semester credits, students can transfer up to 20 credits from another program/university. However, in order to transfer credits into a master's degree program (1) the course must have been at the graduate level (i.e., not an undergraduate course), (2) the course must have been a graded course (i.e., not pass/fail or satisfactory/unsatisfactory), (3) the student must have received a grade of "B" or better in the course, (4) the course must directly substitute for one of the Community Counseling Master's Program courses, AND (5) the transfer must be approved by the student's Faculty Advisor.

What are the strengths of the Community Counseling Master's Program at The University of Akron?

- Continuous CACREP accreditation since 1985 - a founding CACREP-accredited program
- International attention through Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society award recognition – among over 250 chapters around the world, the Alpha Upsilon Chapter won the 2007 International Outstanding Chapter Award and an additional 5 international-level awards over the past seven years, including outstanding practitioner, doctoral student and entry-level student awards
- A 95.7% pass rate on the licensure examination (National Counselor Exam), compared to a 79% national pass rate
- Clinical training at the renowned Clinic for Individual & Family Counseling – students are trained in a unique supervised facility using the most advanced technology among Ohio's counseling programs
- A diverse student population – the program is known for actively recruiting students of differing ethnicities, ages, lifestyles, physical exceptionalities, genders, cultures and nationalities (e.g., students who are Nigerian, Japanese, Indian, Saudi Arabian, Filipino and others).
- A unique academic focus on diversity, advocacy, and social justice work
- Faculty professional diversity, including professional counselors, counseling psychologists, school psychologists, marriage/family therapists – clinical

supervisors range from doctoral-level private practitioners to executive directors of large community mental health agencies

When are Community Counseling courses typically offered?

During Fall and Spring semesters most didactic (non-clinical) coursework is offered in the late afternoons and evenings. During Practicum students are usually required to work some morning/afternoon hours and some early evening hours. During Internship students are usually required to work (part-time) morning and/or afternoon hours.

What is the difference between a degree in Community Counseling and degrees in other mental health professions?

As opposed to other mental health professions, Community Counseling stresses the surrounding community's impact (including culture, social history, and group influences) on mental health. Advocacy, social justice, consultation, and community wellness are therefore part of community counselors' identity. As Professional Counselors/Professional Clinical Counselors, community counselors usually work clinically with individuals and groups (often including couples/families), However, community counselors may also use their roles as advocates and consultants to positively impact the surrounding community, thereby ultimately promoting the wellness of both clients as and society in general.

- Psychologists must earn a Ph.D. in order to become a licensed clinician. Community Counselors are able to practice clinically (with a PC/PCC license) after earning a master's degree. Psychologists tend to learn a scientist/practitioner model of mental health, often from a 'medical model' perspective. Community Counselors learn a practitioner/scientist model which focuses more on the 'art' of counseling from a holistic, wellness perspective.
- Social workers tend to focus on medical/public health, children/family services, or clinical work. Social worker training typically does not focus exclusively on counseling knowledge/skills, as does the Community Counseling training. Social workers usually learn a philosophy that adheres more to a 'medical model' of care, as opposed to the human growth and development philosophy of Community Counselors.
- Marriage and family therapists focus heavily on working with couples/families. Although MFTs also sometimes treat individuals, during training they must specialize (e.g., at least 50% of client contact during clinical training) in couples/family interventions. MFTs view clients issues from a 'systemic' perspective, which includes clients' intimate/family relationships. Community Counselors view client issues/distress more broadly from a community/group/cultural perspective. The community/society is seen as the 'system.' Therefore, Community Counselors may use advocacy and social justice in their professional work.
- School counselors work primarily as guidance counselors in elementary, middle, and high schools. School counselors are trained to work in these settings, and do not typically work in non-educational settings. In Ohio school counselors cannot diagnose and treat mental/emotional disorders. When school counselors encounter clients who may need clinical interventions due

to personal distress or social impairments they often refer to a Community Counselor.

- **How will I gain more information about the Community Counseling Master's Program and the counseling profession?**

Each new student accepted in the Community Counseling Master's Program is assigned a Faculty Advisor before their first semester begins. This provides each student with a contact person for program-related questions. During their first semester in the program students receive their Community Counseling Student Handbook, as well as information about the Department of Counseling, the faculty, and student organizations. Students also register for a Seminar in Counseling course during their first semester in order to learn more about the Department of Counseling and the counseling profession. The Community Counseling course (5600:635) provides in-depth information about the professional identity, roles, ethics, and history of Community Counselors.