

# University of West Florida

## Master of Arts in Psychology - Counseling Specialization

### Frequently Asked Questions (2025)

#### What are the primary goals of the program?

The mental health counseling curriculum of the UWF Master's in Psychology program provides high-quality education and training that prepares graduates to deliver counseling services upon completion of credentialing requirements as a Licensed Mental Health Counselor (LMHC) through the state of Florida (or as a licensed professional counselor in other states). Our program also provides a strong academic foundation for students who wish to go on to mental health care-related doctoral programs following graduation.

#### What are the hallmarks of the UWF program?

The UWF Psychology Department offers a Master's degree in **Psychology**, with a **specialization in Mental Health Counseling** based on a strong foundation in **Psychological Science** and features the following:

- A comprehensive curriculum that meets all of the graduate course requirements for careers both in professional counseling and in psychological science;
- Small class sizes, typically 15-20 students, allowing for individualized attention;
- Knowledgeable and experienced faculty with expertise in counseling and psychotherapy, many of whom conduct research in psychological science;
- Intensive, supervised, coordinated, clinical training in mental health counseling during a year-long, 1,000-hour internship in a community mental health setting;
- A track record of professional success by program graduates, who are highly valued by mental health employers. Our graduates are routinely hired to fill professional mental health counseling positions within weeks of graduation.
- Excellent rates of achievement of Florida licensure and commendable success in psychology doctoral programs admissions.
- The promotion of evidence-based treatment planning.
- An emphasis on health and wellness to build sustainable mental health careers.



*An insignia for UWF featuring Argy, the school mascot.*

## **About the Profession of Mental Health Counseling**

### **What do mental health counselors do? Where do they work?**

LMHCs work in diagnosis, treatment, and aftercare in mental health, but they can also focus on community education and prevention. Their focus is not just on remediating mental illness, but also on promoting healthy behaviors and wellness. LMHCs work in a variety of settings, including independent private practice, inpatient hospital settings, and schools.

### **Who Is qualified to do professional counseling?**

Professional counselors can come from a variety of educational disciplines, including those with Master's degrees in Psychology, Counseling, Social Work, and School Psychology. Some pathways (e.g., LMHC, social work, school psychology) are reliably regulated through licensure, whereas others (e.g., guidance counseling, rehabilitation, addiction counseling) may not be. Licensing regulations vary state by state. Some specializations promote certification rather than licensure.

### **What are the job prospects for LMHCs?**

Strong. Recent findings from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate that the national job growth between 2022 and 2032 in mental health counseling professions is projected at 10.6%. This number translates to over 12,000 new jobs for counselors. With turbulent contemporary phenomena, such as the opioid crisis, escalating rates of suicide, and alarming increases in gun and other forms of violence, the need for mental health services exceeds the professional resources available to meet the demand. School systems are desperate for well-trained mental health workers, given reports of increased depression following the pandemic. The need for well-trained professionals is enormous and our program is dedicated to addressing those needs in northwest Florida and beyond.

### **What kind of salary can an LMHC expect?**

As of May, 2024, LMHC salaries in the United States range from \$66,981 to \$82,511 according to *Salaries.com*. However, salaries are determined by education, certifications, experience, and location. For example, the estimated salary range for LMHCs in Florida is slightly lower at \$63,632 to \$78,385 (and northwest Florida may be even lower than that); the estimates by *Salaries.com* may reflect private practice incomes rather than those in non-profit organizations. You can check on estimated salary ranges for different locations at this website:

<https://www.salary.com/research/salary/listing/licensed-mental-health-counselor-salary>

### **How satisfying is the work life of the professional counselor?**

*U.S. News and World Report* ranked an assortment of counseling roles (addictions counselor, marriage and family therapist, school psychologist, mental health counselor) as high on job satisfaction. The survey suggested that although upward mobility in counseling jobs was rated as just "average," counselors tended to have greater flexibility than most jobs. But the survey suggested that mental health counseling jobs also entail a somewhat higher level of stress than most jobs.

## The Distinctive Features of the UWF Masters In Psychology with a Counseling Specialization

### What makes UWF's programs different from competing programs in the area?

UWF is a highly respected, significant contributor to the mental health workforce in the local community and beyond.

A recent survey reported that our graduates feel better prepared than their peers in the jobs they take after graduation. They value the "science-minded approach" emphasized in the program that reinforces evidence-based or evidence-informed practices. They appreciate our emphasis on research methods, life span issues, and biological perspectives in facilitating sound clinical decisions.



The caliber of faculty in the program is unmatched. Our full-time and adjunct faculty all have doctoral degrees in their specialized fields. They are known for their expertise in addiction counseling, trauma recovery, positive psychology, and couples and group counseling, among others. In addition, the program has nourished strong relationships with community agencies that facilitate outstanding internship opportunities that prepare students especially well for the workforce. We maintain a Counseling Advisory Board, comprised of highly successful counselors in a variety of positions in Escambia and Santa Rosa County who provide helpful feedback and direction to the management of the program.

### Where is the program physically located?

The Masters programs in Psychology (Counseling and Industrial/Organizational) are housed in Building 41 on the north side of the campus. We are conveniently located near the John C. Pace Library for your academic pursuits and UWF's Camellia Garden and the Edward Ball Nature Trail for relaxation between classes.



*Building 41 on the UWF campus.*



**Edward Ball Nature Trail**

## **What does the curriculum look like?**

Our curriculum is carefully balanced between disciplinary core courses (9 hours), classes designed specifically to build clinical acumen (42 hours), and direct service experience in practicum and internship placements (9 hours). The curriculum is aligned with requirements for state licensure in Florida as well as curriculum standards for our MPCAC accreditation.

Here are the course requirements:

### **Psychological Methods and Core Content Courses (9 semester hours)**

- Research Design in Psychology (PSY 6217)
- Cognitive Neuroscience (PSB 5035)
- Developmental Psychology (DEP 5055)

### **Clinical/Counseling Courses (42 semester hours)**

- Assessment in Counseling (PCO 6315)
- Behavior and Cognitive Therapies (EAB 5705)
- Community Psychology (CYP 6005)
- Educational and Vocational Guidance (SDS 6345)
- Ethical and Professional Issues in Counseling (PCO 6206C)
- Human Sexuality and Sex Therapy (SOP 6776)
- Multicultural Counseling (PCO 6278)
- Pre-Practicum: Techniques of Counseling and Psychotherapy (PCO 6204)
- Psychopathology (CLP 5166)

- Theories of Individual Counseling (PCO 6216)
- Theories of Group Counseling (PCO 6246)
- Substance Abuse Counseling (PCO 6312)
- 2 Elective Courses

**Practicum-Internship Courses/Supervision (9 semester hours)**

- Practicum in Counseling (PCO 6946; 150 on-site hours)
- Internship in Counseling I (PCO 6948; 425 on-site hours)
- Internship in Counseling II (PCO 6948; 425 on-site hours)

Here is a typical example of course scheduling:

**First Year:**

Fall: Psychopathology, Developmental Psychology, Community Psychology

Spring: Research Design, Cognitive Neuroscience, Ethics & Professional Issues

Summer: Multicultural Counseling, Educational and Vocational Guidance

**Second Year:**

Fall: Assessment in Counseling, Theories of Individual Counseling, Human Sexuality

Spring: Theories of Group Counseling, Substance Abuse, Pre-Practicum: Counseling Techniques

Summer: Practicum, Elective

**Third Year:**

Fall: Internship, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Spring: Internship, Elective

**What is the length of the program? Can I do the program part-time?**

Students who follow through with the proposed cohort plan should be able to complete the program in 6 regular and 2 summer semesters for a total of 2.75 years. You will register for three courses per semester in the first two years of the program, two courses during two summer sessions, and engage in your internship experiences plus one course in the final year.

A description of the curriculum can be found at this link:

<https://uwf.edu/ukcoh/departments/psychology/graduate-student-resources/counseling-curriculum/>

For best outcomes, we discourage students from trying to complete the program while working a full-time job.

We prefer to admit students who commit to full-time status, but we have made arrangements to accommodate students in good standing who run into difficulties completing the planned course of action. In such cases, students will necessarily end up with a later graduate date.



## **Can I begin the program in January rather than September?**

No. The cohort model means you will move the program with the same students over the course of the 8 semesters. The curriculum is specifically sequenced to scaffold the development of your knowledge and skills so a mid-year start date does not support scaffolded learning.

## **Is there a New Student Orientation?**

Yes, we typically schedule new student orientation for a full day on the Friday before the fall semester begins. Attendance is **mandatory**.

## **Once I complete the program, am I qualified to apply for licensure in Florida?**

Not quite. The program supplies all the requirements to apply for the status of “Registered Mental Health Intern.” Interns work under someone else’s license for two years before becoming eligible to apply for licensure in the state of Florida. Similar practice requirements exist in other states as well.

## **What kind of direct service training is required?**

For their required practicum and internship activities, our students successfully secure training positions in a variety of mental health agencies and hospitals in the Pensacola and Northwest Florida areas. The Practicum course introduces students to direct service responsibilities and the placement site is determined in the Pre-Practicum course. The two Internship experiences that follow provide intensive direct service, simulating what professional life will entail. The range of opportunities allows each student to obtain supervised clinical experiences in a setting that allows for their professional growth and pursuit of specialty interests.

In the 3-semester practicum and internship sequence, the student completes 1000 hours under the supervision of a mental health professional on-site (usually a licensed psychologist or mental health counselor), in addition to clinical faculty members who oversee the student's training experiences within the context of practicum/internship classes. During the course of this year-long experience, the student participates in clinical activities as a member of the professional mental health staff. Successful completion of direct service courses may sometimes result in offers to join the agency in which they do their training.

Some of the settings for direct service placement include:

- Lakeview Center Inc., Escambia Country’s community mental health center
- Lutheran Services Florida, Youth and Family Services
- Twelve Oaks Recovery Center
- Escambia County Jail
- Pensacola State College
- West Florida Hospital
- CDAC Behavioral Healthcare
- Bridgeway Center, Inc.
- The Community Mental Health Center for Okaloosa County

In addition to training placements in the Pensacola area, the department maintains a vigorous campus partnership with UWF's Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) where, over the years, we have successfully placed many interns with an interest in collegiate mental health.



### **What are some specific examples of jobs students have landed after completing the UWF program?**

Many of our graduates go on to work professionally as private practice clinicians, community mental health practitioners, and college counseling center therapists. Graduates of our program also hold other challenging positions, such as project director for a genetics clinic, addictions interventionist in high school settings, and advocacy specialists in domestic violence agencies, among others.

A smaller percentage of our students elect to move on to doctoral programs in Counseling or Clinical Psychology, but they report that their Master's level training in the UWF program has prepared them well for this challenge. This pathway allows students additional professional opportunities to conduct research related to counseling and to teach counseling at the college level.

## **Applying to UWF**

### **What are the entrance requirements for the program?**

The graduate school requires a minimum GPA of 3.0 as a threshold for consideration. The average GPA in the last few cohorts has been around 3.5 so the program is selective. The

program does not require a psychology undergraduate major for admission. At minimum, regular admission requires completing courses in Introductory Psychology, Research Methods, Statistics, Psychology of Learning, and Abnormal Psychology.

### What materials are needed to apply?

Your **letter of intent** needs to address your professional goals, work ethic, and why the science-based nature of the UWF program will help you achieve your objectives. You will need **two letters of recommendation**, at least one of which should come from a faculty member who can speak to your academic capability and character; however, having both letters from faculty produces a stronger impression of your prowess. (If you are hoping to go to graduate school



after being in the workforce for some time, references from supervisors are acceptable). **Transcripts** from your prior programs must be submitted.

Finally, a **resume or a curriculum vitae** emphasizing your objective (long-term goal), academic achievements, relevant skills, work history, volunteer or leadership experiences, and educational history complete the application package.

### What happens to my application once I apply?

The deadline for applying to the program is February 1. Faculty review the pool promptly and identify the candidates they wish to attend a personal interview as part of the application process. Our admission target for the incoming fall cohort is 20 students. Decisions are made resulting in one of three categories: Acceptance, Waitlist, or Rejection.

### Does the program provide “Express Admit” for UWF undergraduates?

We do not participate in UWF’s “express admit” program, but we do provide special consideration for UWF students who have performed well at the undergraduate level in a program we call “Early Decision.” Qualifications for this process include earning at least a 3.75 GPA. The early decision deadline is November 1. Applicants need to submit a transcript, a resume, one letter of recommendation, and a writing sample that reflects effective writing on a psychology-based project. The faculty screen applications and invite promising candidates to participate in an interview with two faculty members. Admission officials communicate decision status promptly, no later than December 1. Students who are not granted early decision admission may still compete in the traditional admission process.

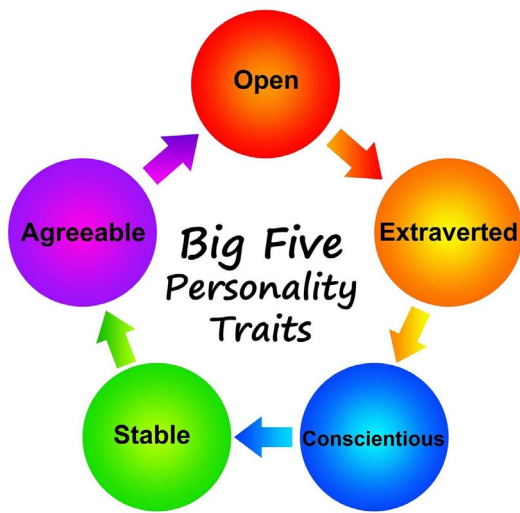


## What strategies can strengthen your application?

- Write a thoughtful and professional letter of intent that reveals your motivation and commitment as well as high-quality writing skills. Get feedback on your letter from faculty or peers before you submit it. The typical length of a letter of intent is two to three pages.
- Get some experience with mental health populations either in a work or volunteer context. Elaborate your ability and enthusiasm for working with diverse populations, particularly highlighting any direct experience you have achieved in this important area.
- Give some concrete examples of the ways in which you might add value to the incoming cohort. Consider elaborating volunteer experience, technological skills, or second language proficiency, among other options.
- Secure enthusiastic letters of recommendation rather than bland reports that “you got an A” in a specific class. Ask people who know your strengths and weaknesses well if they can write a *strong* letter of support.
- Address “trouble” indicators in your history explicitly and honestly. If you started out as a weak undergraduate, explain the factors that may have brought you around to being a more serious scholar to help us understand a less-than-ideal GPA.
- Avoid lengthy discussion of the ups and downs of your own mental health journey (e.g., “I want to help others overcome what I have...”). That elaboration can send up a red flag about your motives for becoming a counselor.
- Inform your reference letter writers why you are interested in UWF specifically as this action can help the writer develop a stronger and more persuasive letter on your behalf.
- Follow up with the Graduate School to make sure that your application is complete: missing transcripts and letters of recommendation may eliminate you from consideration.



## What are the characteristics of students who thrive in our program?



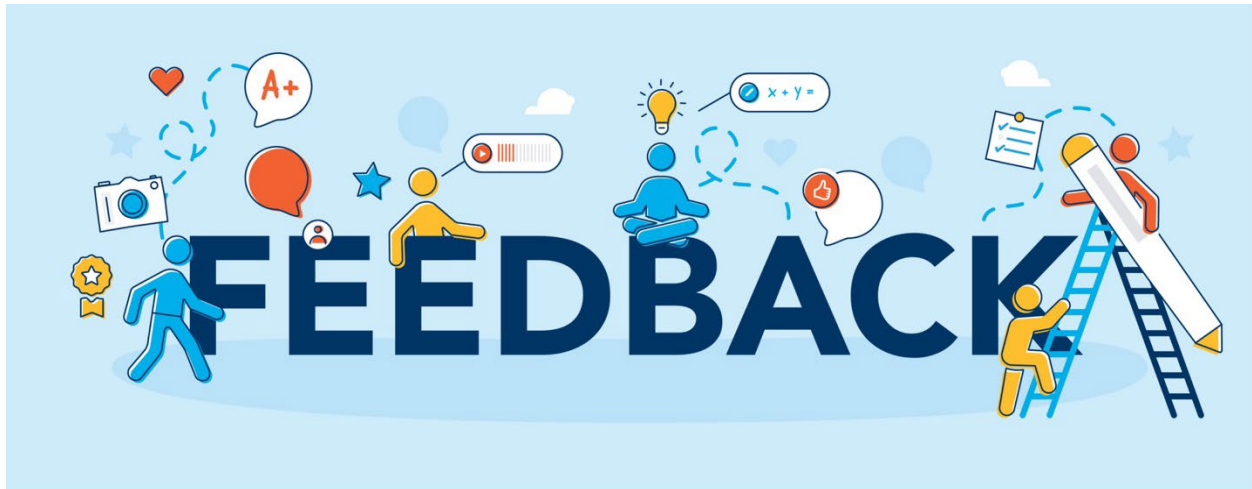
**Conscientiousness.** Successful students are good time managers, keep their promises, and don't take on too many commitments that will interfere with doing their best work. They engage in healthy practices and avoid potential addiction, including too much time in the digital world. They avoid multitasking. They dedicate themselves to careful and reflective reading of assignments and they scrutinize assignment instructions to ensure they do their best work. They exude a strong work ethic and personal integrity. High achieving academic records give evidence of their intelligence.

**Agreeableness.** Successful students show good listening skills and strive to understand the viewpoints of others. They tend to be more optimistic than pessimistic when confronting challenges. However, their scientific orientation helps them balance agreeableness with "amiable skepticism." They are appropriately and sensitively critical in offering feedback to peers and faculty.

**Stability.** Successful students know or learn how to manage the normal chaos that routinely arises in life. Graduate school is challenging and requires sacrifice, not just from the student, but from the student's family and friends. Challenges are inevitable, but resilient students tend to minimize chaos in their lives through good planning and clear communication. They accept that managing reasonable anxiety levels can facilitate their best performance. They know when to ask for assistance if circumstances become problematic.

**Openness.** Successful students are open and eager to learn new ideas. They enjoy working with diverse people and viewpoints. They adapt their behavior from constructive feedback and accept that mistakes are inevitable, but they commit to learn from them. They have a growth rather than a fixed mindset.

**Extraversion.** Our program tends to appeal both to people who have either an extraverted or introverted personality; both styles have advantages. Extraverts may have less anxiety when meeting new people and tend to engage more easily in class discussions. On the other hand, introverts thrive on the privacy of working one-on-one with clients and may adapt better to getting constructive feedback. Both personality styles can be successful in our program. The various experiences the program provides will help students develop strategies for managing normal anxieties about working with people and promote strong interpersonal, assertive, and collaborative skills. We help you develop your professional presence and voice.



### **What kind of feedback will I receive to know how I'm doing?**

Grades will be an important indicator. Students must achieve at least a B in graduate courses for their credit to count toward the degree. In addition, the department members systematically review each student's holistic student performance with an overall judgment about exceeding, meeting, or not meeting program expectations.

### **Is there recognition for outstanding work at the graduate level?**

Every spring the Usha Kundu College of Health honors the outstanding graduate student and the outstanding graduate assistant with a special ceremony and a plaque. Students in the Counseling program have been honored as "best of the best" in the past.

### **Are any components of the program online?**

Not currently. We strongly believe that the best counselor education programs require face-to-face experience to reap the greatest benefit. In addition, our small class sizes enable us to provide highly personalized attention. As the pandemic has taught us, we can't rule out the use of digital delivery during emergency conditions. Consequently, knowing how to use digital media for instruction (e.g., uploading videos, participating in zoom sessions) may be helpful in those situations. You will also need to develop expertise in navigating Canvas architecture, which is the learning mediated system we use at UWF.

### **Is personal therapy required in the program?**

Although it is not a requirement, it is highly recommended as a means of sensitizing future practitioners to the emotional challenges and rewards of seeking therapy. If you seek

assistance from the Counseling CAPS, it would not preclude you from getting an internship at that placement site in your third year.

### What are the costs associated with the graduate program?

## 2024-2025 Tuition Rate per Credit Hour\*

Residency	Undergraduate	Graduate
Florida	\$211.98	\$377.60
Alabama	\$316.98	\$482.60
Non-Florida	\$641.37	\$1,037.24

A complete listing of associated fees can be found at this website:

[https://pdf.live/edit?url=https://uwf.edu/media/university-of-west-florida/finance-and-administration/departments/controller/cashier-student-accounts/2024-2025-Tuition-Rates.pdf&guid=54423157-b5d9-6023-1835-519887af1c84&installDate=040224&source=google-d\\_pdfiab\\_crx](https://pdf.live/edit?url=https://uwf.edu/media/university-of-west-florida/finance-and-administration/departments/controller/cashier-student-accounts/2024-2025-Tuition-Rates.pdf&guid=54423157-b5d9-6023-1835-519887af1c84&installDate=040224&source=google-d_pdfiab_crx)



### What kind of financial support is available?

The Psychology Department offers a limited number of graduate assistantships in which students commit ten hours of work per week usually under the supervision of one or two faculty members. GAs can serve as teaching assistants and perform low-stakes grading, exam proctoring, and other activities that support faculty members, including assisting in their research programs. The pay varies by semester but is linked to minimum wage requirements, which at this time specify about \$15.50 per hour. In addition to the direct compensation, tuition costs are waived for six graduate credits. Graduate assistantships are competitive and assigned at the start of the fall semester; the GA can be renewed based on satisfactory performance for the spring semester.

Students can also apply for GAs outside the department. Approximately 50% of all UWF graduate students receive some kind of funding support for their studies. GA assignments, paid at minimum wage, are typically ten hours a week but cannot exceed 20 hours a week. Further



information about the UWF GA and other funding opportunities can be found at this website: <https://uwf.edu/graduate/tuition-funding/assistantships/>.

In addition, scholarship funding may also be available through the Pace Fund and Merit Scholarships. Pace funds are distributed to first year students only and the awards are variable but average \$500. Merit Scholarships may be available only to full need. The awards target students who are residents of Santa Rosa or Escambia County. These scholarships take into account financial circumstances and are granted at the discretion of the program faculty.

### **Does UWF support graduate student travel?**

Yes. Students can apply for up to \$700 for individual support at a professional conference. Students often attend the Southeastern Psychological Association conference, which rotates among various large southern cities every April. The conference features both faculty and student presentations across different psychology specialties, including counseling. Conferences with more specialized emphases (e.g., teaching, addictions, positive psychology) can also qualify for funding.

There are no current stipulations that you must be a presenter to receive funding. Only one trip can be funded during your specific graduate experience. Details on Student Government Association travel grants can be found at this website: <https://uwf.edu/academic-engagement-and-student-affairs/departments/student-government-association/resources/as-fee-information/>

### **Are the professors in the program responsive to student feedback?**

Yes, although receptivity may vary from professor to professor. To facilitate a good understanding of the students' perspectives, the program established a Student Advisory Board constituted of at least six individuals, two from each of the three cohorts. The program director convenes the advisory board at minimum once a semester. Duties include providing feedback on the academic climate as well as supporting/developing student activities in the program. Serving on the board is voluntary, but does provide additional opportunity to refine leadership skills.

### **Does the program offer student health insurance?**

No. Student Health Services can provide some care on campus, but obtaining independent insurance is highly recommended for students who are pursuing graduate degrees and are not covered by parental policies or other means. You can explore your options for securing health insurance at [Healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov/).

## **What Do I Need to Know about Mental Health Counseling “Accreditation”?**

### **Is the UWF Masters in Psychology - Counseling Specialization accredited?**

Yes. UWF’s program is accredited by MPCAC (Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council). The accreditation is valid through 2032. The program fulfills all of the graduate education requirements for licensure as a mental health counselor in Florida (and meets or exceeds the educational requirements for practice as a licensed professional counselor or licensed mental health counselor in other states).

### **What is accreditation?**

Accreditation is a process in higher education by which a discipline-based professional organization systematically reviews the operations of a program. Being “accredited” means the program has provided evidence that it is faithfully fulfilling its mission and vision and producing high quality graduates in keeping with accepted standards practiced in the discipline. The process of accreditation involves the faculty conducting a comprehensive self-study and then hosting accreditors for an onsite visit in which they interview program stakeholders. Accreditation visits typically transpire between five and ten years depending upon the accrediting agency’s preference.

### **How important is program accreditation for mental health counseling licensure?**

Students who wish to become LMHCs generally pursue one of two pathways: psychology-based programs and education-based programs. Students can also pursue mental health careers by earning a degree in social work. All three pathways have separate accreditation procedures to ensure high quality training takes place and to verify that students are being properly prepared in their respective disciplines.

Currently, psychology-based counseling programs have two accreditation options. The more established process involves oversight from the Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC); their guidelines can be accessed at this website: <https://mpcacaccreditation.org/>. UWF was one of the first programs to be accredited by the MPCAC process and is currently in good standing.

The American Psychological Association (APA) recently established an accreditation process for master’s level programs and they are in the early stages of working out how accreditation will unfold. Here is the link to their accrediting process: [https://accreditation.apa.org/about-coa/masters-accreditation?\\_ga=2.220244120.1007079596.1675713066-1651886411.1666100764](https://accreditation.apa.org/about-coa/masters-accreditation?_ga=2.220244120.1007079596.1675713066-1651886411.1666100764)

Students who choose the education route, in which the emphasis is likely to adjustment issues, will fare best by attending programs accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling

and Related Education Programs (CACREP). Other mental health-oriented occupations can involve different accreditors. School psychologists are accredited by the National Association of School Psychology. Social workers are accredited by the National Association for Social Work. Psychology-based programs, which concentrate on working with a broad scope of mental health conditions, are accredited by the Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council (MPCAC).

**LMHC Pathways and Respective Accrediting Agencies: A Summary Table**

<b>Psychology-Based Pathways</b>	<b>Education-Based Pathways</b>	<b>Social Work Pathway</b>
<p><b>MPCAC</b> Masters in Psychology and Counseling Accreditation Council</p>	<p><b>CACREP</b> Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs</p>	<p><b>NASW</b> National Association of Social Workers</p>
<p><b>APA</b> American Psychological Association</p>	<p><b>NASP</b> National Association of School Psychology</p>	

**How do state requirements influence training decisions?**

States differ in their licensing requirements for mental health counseling. In recent years CACREP has been strategic in attempting to “corner the job market” for their graduates. For example, a few years ago the state legislature of Florida passed a regulation that only CACREP graduates could sit for the licensure exam; however, managers of psychology-based programs in the state of Florida collaborated and successfully persuaded the legislature that other kinds of accreditation should also be honored to avoid monopoly by one training approach. A similar CACREP dominance strategy recently failed in Georgia. Although inroads were initially made by CACREP to be the only kind of nationally recognized mental health care provider, it appears that advocates for psychology-based programs have been effective in countering this push in most contexts.

Currently only a few states (e.g., South and North Carolina, Kentucky, and Ohio) limit LMHC licensure opportunities to students who have gotten their degrees from a CACREP program, but the vast majority of state licensing requirements recognize that psychology-based training is at least of equal value to education-based training. Psychology-based practitioners argue that having a scientific orientation adds value over education-based programs because of psychology’s advocacy for evidence-based interventions.

Therefore, the question of accreditation for counseling professionals has definitely become a political challenge. Psychologists argue that restricting mental health counseling to just the educational pathway, especially at a time when mental health demands are burgeoning, is counterproductive in meeting our national mental health needs. We believe that it also is

illogical to exclude psychology-trained professionals from delivering mental health care services since psychology programs also produce doctoral-level mental health practitioners. Psychology-based programs make no exclusionary efforts toward education-based programs, recognizing the legitimacy of their training and the magnitude of public need, but that position is not reciprocated by CACREP.

### **What are the implications for choice of training program type?**

Most programs are designed to incorporate the standards of their respective accreditors as well as whatever standards have been adopted within the state, but it is unrealistic for any training program to prepare students to practice in all states since requirements may differ and also may continually change. As a consequence, students should strive to determine where they eventually hope to practice and to check on the state's regulations to determine if there are any training restrictions in securing licensure (e.g., "must graduate from a CACREP accredited program"). **The majority of state programs will list CACREP as just one qualifying pathway, but will add "or equivalent" or some other phrasing to legitimize the role of other appropriate professional accrediting groups.** For an up-to-date description of state requirements, go to this website: <https://www.mentalhealthcounselorlicense.com/> and click on the state in which you have an interest to reside after your training is completed. Read all the way through the educational qualifications to be sure that psychology-based programs have "parity" with CACREP programs. However, licensing requirements can change. The final authority is checking in with the website operated by the state's licensing agency.

### **Is it true you can't get a counseling job if your degree doesn't come from a CACREP program?**

**Not true in the state of Florida.** Licensure in Florida supports the independent practice of mental health counseling and insurance reimbursement for counseling service provision for the wide variety of counseling jobs available in the state. We continue to monitor the CACREP landscape so we can help students make good decisions about where to study.

Some potential employers also specify what kind of education a mental health counselor should have. For example, the VA and the Department of Defense have at times indicated a preference for CACREP-trained counselors. However, with increasing demands for mental health care professionals, the landscape has been changing so it is best to explore whether training restrictions exist for future employers you may be considering. We suspect that the restrictions of this type are likely to undergo political challenge and may change in a way that favors moving away from the CACREP restrictive policy.

### **Does UWF's Master's in Psychology with Counseling Specialization degree offer any advantages over programs accredited by NASW, NASP, or CACREP?**

Our Master's degree in Psychology specializing in mental health counseling fulfills all of the requirements for licensure and practice of mental health counseling at the Master's level in



Florida and many other states that license counseling practice at the Master's level. Our degree is highly transportable to the vast majority of states. UWF offers the advantage of providing future counseling professionals with all of the mandatory course content and supervised internship training required of non-psychology degree programs in counseling AND a strong scientific foundation for practice based in the rich history of the field of psychology that cannot be found outside of a psychology program. UWF grads are trained in the practice of mental health counseling and the psychological science foundations of that practice! We believe that this "added value" provides much greater breadth in job opportunities after graduation.

We are especially adept at providing appropriately scaffolded learning experiences and sensitive feedback to assist in your development of clinical skills. We give you a formal judgment about your "standing" at the end of every semester along with feedback about areas that may need attention as well as recognition for exemplary performance.

Because we also emphasize establishing solid self-care practices early in your program, we think we provide holistic attention to your development. That approach includes promoting strong relationships among the people in your cohort, many of whom may end up becoming life-long friends.

### **Are there other reasons to choose UWF's Psychology MA in Counseling?**



- World class white sand beaches are just 30 minutes away.
- The cost of living and tuition costs in Florida are favorable compared to many other states.
- Professional hockey and baseball teams can satisfy your spectator sport urges;
- Traffic remains manageable despite some population growth; you will rarely be caught in a traffic jam.
- During pleasant weather, Pensacola hosts a mind-boggling variety of festivals to help you unwind and relax.
- Culture fans can get their needs met through the Pensacola Symphony, the Pensacola Opera, a Broadway series, music venues, and an assortment of excellent (nonchain) restaurants.
- The campus is a nature preserve in which we share space with some

interesting critters and is quite walkable; unlike most campuses, parking is not much of a hassle.

- Our program faculty, department administrative assistant, advisor,

and librarian support liaison are outstanding in their commitment to helping you succeed.

*If you have additional questions, please contact the Counseling Director.*