



# ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT

Clinical Mental Health Counseling, M.S.

*Department of Psychology and Counseling  
Utah Valley University*

**Reporting Period: Academic Year 2025–2026**

Published: May 28, 2026

## ACCREDITATION STATUS

Accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling  
and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) — 2024 Standards

*Accreditation cycle: February 3, 2026 – 2034*

Prepared by

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Associate Professor & Program Director

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## 1. Letter from the Program Director

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Dear colleagues, students, alumni, and community partners,

This has been a defining year for our Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. In February 2026, we were granted accreditation by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) under the 2024 Standards, marking the successful culmination of nearly two years of program-wide work to align our curriculum, assessment practices, and clinical training infrastructure with the new requirements. I am deeply grateful to UVU administration, faculty, students, supervisors, and community partners whose contributions made this milestone possible — and whose ongoing investment in the program continues to shape what we do. It was also a year that asked much of our campus community, and one in which the work of mental health counseling felt especially close to home.

Alongside accreditation, this year brought meaningful growth across the program. We welcomed our largest cohort to date — 54 students — and celebrated 26 graduates, whose practicum and internship work contributed more than 18,000 hours of counseling service to our community, including over 7,000 hours of direct client care. We also marked a milestone moment: our first graduates have now obtained full licensure as Clinical Mental Health Counselors — completing the program's first full pipeline from admission to independent practice.

This year also brought important additions to the program. We were pleased to welcome Dr. Shantelle Tjaden to our faculty. We launched the Assessment Project at the UVU Community Mental Health Clinic, providing free and low-cost clinical assessments for ADHD, autism, and related concerns to community members — extending both our service reach and our students' clinical training in assessment. We also received approval as an NBCC Approved Continuing Education Provider, expanding our capacity to serve practicing counselors across Utah. Faculty continued to contribute to the profession through active scholarship and service, with their accomplishments detailed in the sections that follow.

The year ahead brings continued momentum. We will submit our CACREP Progress Report in November 2026, advance scholarship that contributes to the broader counseling profession, and continue cultivating a program that prepares ethical, skilled, and self-aware mental health counselors for service in Utah and beyond. Thank you for being part of this work.

Warmly,

**Carrie Merino, PhD, CMHC**

Associate Professor & Program Director

Clinical Mental Health Counseling, M.S.

## 2. Vital Statistics & Academic Quality Indicators

This section reports the academic quality indicators required by CACREP 2024 Standard 2.E. All data reflect the 2025–2026 academic year, with two prior years provided for trend visibility.

Indicator	Definition / Source	AY 2023–2024	AY 2024–2025	AY 2025–2026
Number of students enrolled	<i>Headcount (fall census)</i>	48	53	81
Number of graduates	<i>Degrees conferred</i>	21	24	26
Completion rate	<i>% completing within published timeframe</i>	—	91%	96%
Credentialing exam pass rate	<i>NCMHCE / first attempt</i>	—	100%	100%
Job placement rate	<i>% employed in counseling field</i>	—	100%	100%

**Definitions & data sources.** *Enrollment reflects program headcount at the fall census date. Completion rate is the percentage of students completing the program within 150% of published time-to-degree. Credentialing exam pass rate reflects graduate self-report on first attempt of the National Clinical Mental Health Counseling Examination (NCMHCE), reported through the alumni survey. Job placement reflects alumni employed in a counseling or counseling-adjacent role at or within 12 months of graduation. Dashes (—) indicate data not systematically collected before the current alumni and graduate-survey infrastructure was launched in AY 2024–2025.*

## 3. Community Partner & Stakeholder Feedback

In accordance with CACREP 2024 Standard 2.F, the program systematically collects and uses feedback from community partners — site supervisors, employers, alumni, and the program's Advisory Board.

### Site Supervisor Feedback

Site supervisors evaluate students each semester across Counseling Skills (e.g., reflection of feelings, empathy, multicultural competence, DSM-5 diagnostic skills, suicide risk assessment) and Counseling Dispositions and Behaviors (e.g., ethics, professional behavior, emotional stability, openness to feedback) using a 5-point rubric ranging from “Harmful” to “Exceeds Expectations / Demonstrates Competencies.”

During the 2025–2026 academic year, students were evaluated by site supervisors across three points in the clinical sequence: Practicum (Summer 2025), Internship I (Fall 2025), and Internship II (Spring 2026).

Across all three evaluation points, no students were rated as “Harmful” on any skill or disposition. The overwhelming majority of ratings fell in the “Meets Expectations” or “Exceeds Expectations” categories, with strongest performance in foundational counseling skills (empathy and caring, respect and compassion), suicide risk assessment, and key professional dispositions including ethics, motivation to learn, and openness to feedback.

Consistent with expected clinical developmental trajectories, ratings showed progression across the three points: a greater proportion of “Exceeds Expectations” ratings emerged in Internship II compared to Practicum, particularly in foundational skills, multicultural competence, and assessment-related areas. Growth areas included Confrontation — consistently the most challenging skill area, though primarily rated as “Meets Expectations” — and DSM-5 Diagnostic Skills, which improved markedly between Internship I and Internship II.

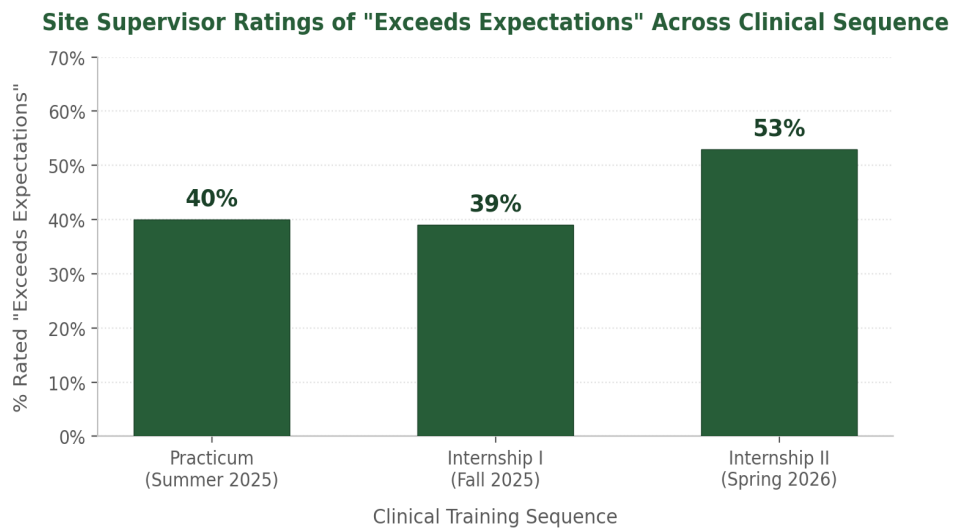


Figure 1. Percentage of student skill and disposition ratings at “Exceeds Expectations” across the AY 2025–2026 clinical training sequence (weighted average across 14 counseling skills and 11 professional dispositions).

These findings inform ongoing curricular and clinical training refinements documented in Section 4.

### Alumni Survey

The Alumni Survey is administered on a three-year cycle to balance meaningful longitudinal data collection with respondent burden. The most recent administration was completed in May 2025, with 24 alumni from the 2023–2025 graduating cohorts responding. The next administration is scheduled for Spring 2028.

Alumni rated their preparation across all four core competency domains at or above the “Meets Expectations” benchmark on a 0–3 scale. Clinical experiences — practicum and internship coursework, and site and university supervisors — emerged as the strongest contributors to alumni preparation.

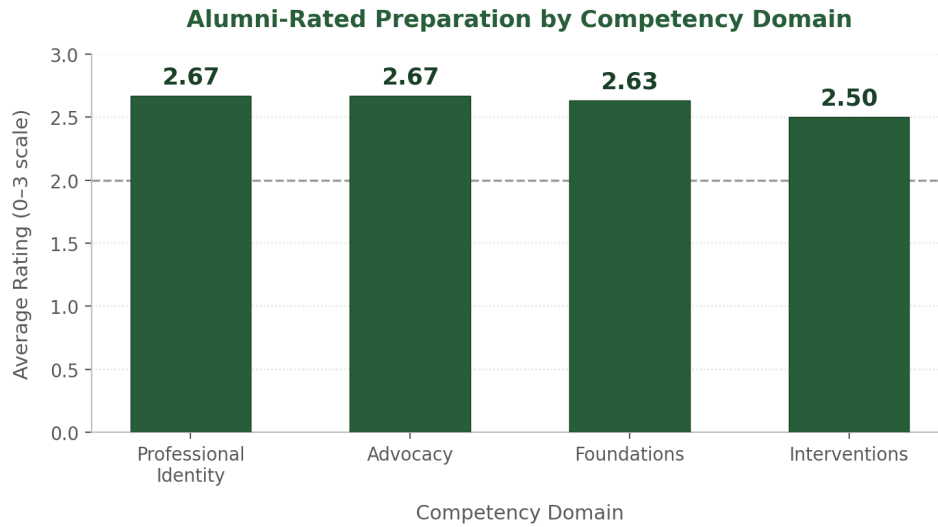


Figure 2. Alumni-rated preparation by competency domain, Alumni Survey 2025 (N = 24). Dashed line = Meets Expectations benchmark (2.0).

Alumni also reported meaningful cohort-over-cohort improvement, with overall training effectiveness ratings rising across the program’s first three graduating classes — a 29% improvement from 2023 to 2025.

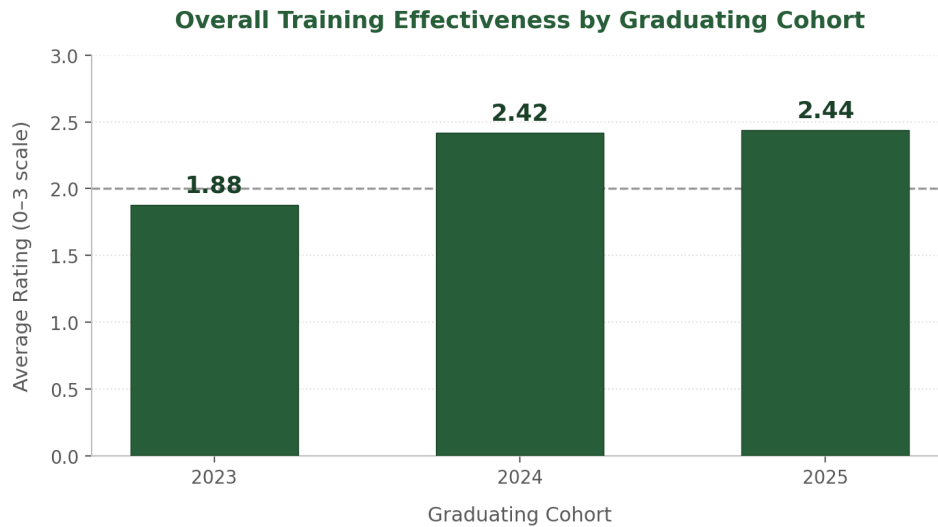


Figure 3. Overall training effectiveness by graduating cohort, Alumni Survey 2025 (N = 24). Dashed line = Meets Expectations benchmark (2.0).

Open-ended feedback identified key strengths in clinical training, the program’s deliberate practice model, and faculty mentorship. Growth opportunities included aligning coursework more closely with the licensure examinations, strengthening site-supervisor vetting and training, and enhancing direct faculty supervision and case review. These findings inform the program improvements documented in Section 4.

## Employer Survey

The Employer Survey is planned for first administration during the 2026–2027 academic year, with a three-year cycle thereafter. The survey will gather employer perspective on graduate workforce readiness, perceived strengths, and growth opportunities. Findings will be reported in future annual reports.

## Advisory Board

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program established its inaugural Advisory Board during the 2025–2026 academic year. The Board’s first meetings will begin in Fall 2026, with regular convenings thereafter to inform curriculum, clinical training, and program outcomes. Recommendations from the Board will be reported in future annual reports.

## 4. Program Modifications Based on Assessment

The table below documents the program's data-to-decision process for the reporting period. It demonstrates how assessment findings, stakeholder feedback, and CACREP alignment work informed faculty decisions and concrete program modifications.

Source of data	Finding	Faculty discussion / decision	Action taken & target term
Site supervisor evaluations (Practicum / Internship I / Internship II); Alumni Survey 2025 open-ended feedback.	Students rated lower on DSM-5 Diagnostic Skills in earlier clinical placements. Alumni feedback identified the need for stronger alignment between coursework and licensure examination content.	Faculty reviewed CMHC 6030 (Diagnosis in Counseling), identifying over-weighting toward recall-based assessment relative to clinical application and inconsistencies across sections. Faculty agreed on a unified course framework with consistent required elements aligned with CACREP standards.	Beginning Fall 2026, all CMHC 6030 sections will include consistent required elements: Mental Status Examination instruction, Diagnostic Interview Video, and screening instrument integration. Grade weighting rebalanced toward application-based assessment. Faculty handout distributed.
Student feedback on Instructor Teaching Evaluations (Practicum, Internship I, Internship II).	Students identified the need for greater consistency in clinical training assignments across sections and instructors, clearer rubrics, and more intentional developmental sequencing between	Faculty conducted a comprehensive review of Practicum and Internship I / II syllabi and determined that programmatically embedded assignments would improve student experience, provide clearer expectations, and create an intentional	Embedded program-wide assignments developed for AY 2025–2026: matched Case Presentation formats; Advanced Personal Guiding Theory Paper (Internship I) building on the Practicum PGT Reflection; Treatment Outcome Review integrated into the Internship II Case Conceptualization; and

Source of data	Finding	Faculty discussion / decision	Action taken & target term
	Practicum and the Internship sequence.	developmental arc across clinical training.	Culminating Professional Presentation (Internship II). All assignments use a unified four-level rubric framework. Faculty PLO Alignment Guide produced for accreditation documentation.
Summer 2025 Site Supervisor Survey; student skill evaluations across Practicum and Internship.	Students were identified as having limited ability to integrate clinical assessment instruments into counseling work. Course exposure to actual psychological testing platforms used in clinical settings was identified as insufficient preparation.	Faculty determined that integrating real-world clinical instruments and testing platforms into the Psychological Assessment course (CMHC 6060) would bridge the gap between theoretical assessment knowledge and the operational workflow students encounter in clinical practice.	In Spring 2026, the program established direct partnerships with Pearson (Q-Global), PAR, and WPS, integrating three online psychological testing platforms into CMHC 6060 and the program’s broader clinical training infrastructure. Students now gain hands-on practice administering, scoring, and interpreting instruments throughout the semester. Partnerships generated cost savings for the program.

## 5. Faculty & Program Highlights

### Faculty Scholarship & Service

Highlights of CMHC faculty contributions to the counseling profession during AY 2025–2026 are listed below. In addition to the items shown, all faculty contributed substantial service to the program through admissions, advising, curricular work, clinical training, orientation, and search committee participation.

#### Publications

- Coney, K., Toomey, J., Wang, K., Kivlighan, M., Pérez-Rojas, A., Sanders, P., ...Bailey, R. J. (2025). Do therapists become more culturally humble with experience? Some humility is warranted. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 72*(5), 517–522.
- Ghelfi, E. A., Top, D. N., Fox, S. T., Goates-Jones, M. K., Ogles, B., Bailey, R. J., Brown, B. T., Erekson, D. M., Bledsoe, A., Dixon, R. S., Parker, A., Thacker, A., & Leroy, T. (2026). When clients with increasing symptoms report improvement in psychotherapy: A qualitative analysis. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*.
- Whiting, J., Fife, S., Davis, S., Ogles, B. M., & Bailey, R. J. (2025). Corrective experiencing as a common factor in couple therapy: Creating new and positive emotions in relationships. *Family Process, 64*(4).

### Conference Presentations

- Bailey, R. J., & Morrison, A. (2026, March). *Common factors therapy: Principle-based practice, training, and supervision*. Rocky Mountain Psychological Association annual convention, Boise, ID.
- Law, J. (2025, October). *Advanced clinical supervision techniques*. UVU Mental Health Conference 2025.
- Law, J. (2025, October). *Ethical foundations and best practices in clinical supervision*. UVU Mental Health Conference 2025.
- Merino, C. (2025, October). *The Affective Learning Group Model: A unique pedagogical approach to teaching group multicultural counseling skills*. Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Biennial Conference.
- Tjaden, S. (2025, October). Refereed presentation. Association for Counselor Education and Supervision Biennial Conference.
- Tjaden, S. Refereed presentation at the Animal-Assisted Services International Conference.
- Wang, K., Toomey, J. N., Top, D. N., Bailey, R. J., Perez-Rojas, A. E., Wilcox, M. M., & Kivlighan, M. (2025, August). *Examining the mechanistic effect of cultural humility on psychotherapy outcomes*. American Psychological Association annual convention, Denver, CO.
- Wayman, D., & Law, J. (2026, January). *Supervision of counselors after a campus tragedy*. Indiana Counseling Association.
- West, T., Bailey, R. J., Leroy, T., & Top, D. N. (2026, March). *Developing an assessment tool to evaluate common factors therapy principles*. Rocky Mountain Psychological Association annual convention, Boise, ID.

### Invited Talks

- Bailey, R. J. (2025, October 21). *Common factors therapy overview*. Sandstone Psychology, Payson, UT.
- Bailey, R. J. (2025, October 27). *Cultural competency workshop: Mental health*. UVU campus audience.
- Bailey, R. J. (2026, March 10). *Common factors therapy overview*. BYU Counseling Psychology PhD course.
- Bailey, R. J., & Eggertsen, L. (2026, March 16). *Cultural competency workshop: Mental health*. UVU campus audience.

- Law, J. (2026, March 20). *Ethical foundations, best practices, and models of clinical supervision*. UVU CMHC Program Supervision Training.
- Merino, C. (2026, February 3). *Autism spectrum disorders*. UVU Psychology Program.

### Highlighted Professional Service

- Tjaden, S. Co-chair, Graduate Student and Emerging Professionals Committee, Utah Mental Health Counselors Association.
- Tjaden, S. Board of Directors, International Society for Anthrozoology.

## Program & Community Engagement

The CMHC program expanded its faculty, training infrastructure, and community partnerships during the 2025–2026 academic year.

**New full-time faculty.** Dr. Shantelle Tjaden joined the program as Assistant Professor in Fall 2025. With this addition, the CMHC program now operates with four full-time faculty, one part-time faculty member, and four affiliate adjunct instructors.

**Assessment Project launch.** In Fall 2025, the program launched the Assessment Project at the UVU Community Mental Health Clinic, providing free and low-cost clinical assessments for ADHD, autism, and related concerns to members of the community. The Project simultaneously expands student training opportunities in standardized clinical assessment under faculty supervision. Initial supplies and infrastructure were funded in part by the UVU GEL Grant program.

**Strong applicant pool for AY 2026–2027.** The program received 152 applications during the AY 2025–2026 admissions cycle, with 119 completed and 39 accepted — a 30.51% acceptance rate. Accepted students enter with a 3.6 average GPA, including three holding prior master’s degrees (Health Policy Administration, Theater, and Library Science). The incoming cohort is 92% Utah residents, with 20% identifying as racial or ethnic identities other than white.

**NBCC Approved Continuing Education Provider status.** The CMHC program received approval as a National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC) Approved Continuing Education Provider during the reporting period. This designation enables the program to offer continuing education credit to practicing counselors across Utah, extending the program’s contribution to the counseling workforce beyond its degree-seeking student body.

**Community counseling service.** The 2025–2026 graduating cohort contributed more than 18,000 hours of counseling service to communities across Utah through practicum and internship placements, including more than 7,000 hours of direct client care.

## 6. Looking Ahead

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The following goals will guide program priorities for the 2026–2027 academic year:

- **Expand cohort admissions.** Beginning in the 2026–2027 academic year, the program will admit students in both Summer and Fall terms, expanding access and increasing the pipeline of trained mental health counselors serving Utah communities.
- **Submit CACREP Progress Report.** The program will submit its CACREP Progress Report in November 2026, addressing items identified during the December 2025 site visit and demonstrating continued alignment with the 2024 CACREP Standards.
- **Convene inaugural Advisory Board.** The Advisory Board will hold its first meetings in Fall 2026, beginning regular convenings to inform curriculum, clinical training, and program outcomes.
- **Launch Employer Survey.** The program will administer its inaugural Employer Survey, expanding the systematic stakeholder feedback infrastructure begun with the Alumni Survey.
- **Expand continuing education offerings.** Building on the program’s new NBCC Approved Continuing Education Provider status, the program will expand its continuing education programming during 2026–2027, including the launch of a State Approved Supervision Certification course for site supervisors at low cost. This initiative strengthens the supervision pipeline that supports student clinical training and contributes to the broader counseling workforce in Utah.

## Appendix: Program Overview

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### Vision

We educate clinical mental health counselor leaders and advocates who embody multicultural competence, ethical principles, and theoretically grounded practice.

### Mission

As part of Utah Valley University, our mission is built on the following action commitments:

**Include.** We cultivate a program culture of belonging for students from diverse backgrounds. In all courses, students engage in self-reflective exploration while gaining practical counseling knowledge and skills.

**Engage.** We promote growth through experiential and engaged learning with a focus on practical application of counseling interventions for client well-being. We foster a clinical training environment that emphasizes lifespan development, professional advocacy, and community service.

**Achieve.** We achieve excellence by preparing students to uphold rigorous ethical and theoretical standards in counseling practice, ensuring readiness to address the diverse needs of the communities they serve.

## Program Learning Objectives

Graduates of the UVU Clinical Mental Health Counseling program demonstrate the following Program Learning Objectives:

1. Develop a professional counselor identity that emphasizes wellness, interdisciplinary collaboration, and ongoing professional development.
2. Implement safe, inclusive, and culturally responsive counseling services that respect and celebrate the uniqueness of all populations.
3. Engage with self-exploration to understand how personal values and experiences influence professional counseling.
4. Apply policy, ethical codes, and laws throughout the ethical decision-making process to ensure best counseling practice.
5. Evaluate counseling-specific scholarly literature to inform practice.
6. Establish intentional and collaborative counseling relationships with clients.
7. Create theoretical case conceptualizations that inform counseling assessment, planning, and intervention.
8. Utilize assessment tools for diagnosis, treatment planning, counseling outcomes, and program evaluation.
9. Employ a variety of counseling modalities, including interventions for individuals, groups, children, adolescents, couples, and families.

## Delivery & Structure

The Clinical Mental Health Counseling program is an accelerated 60-credit Master of Science program delivered across five consecutive semesters (Fall, Spring, Summer, Fall, Spring), allowing students to complete their degree in approximately 22 months. Students enter as a Fall cohort and progress through coursework and clinical training together. Courses are delivered in a combination of in-person, hybrid, and asynchronous online formats. The clinical training sequence includes Practicum in the third

semester (Summer), followed by Internship I in Fall and Internship II in Spring at approved community partner sites.

## Faculty

Faculty member	Rank / role	Credentials	FT / PT / Affiliate
Carrie Merino	Associate Professor & Program Director	PhD, CMHC	Full-time
Jamison Law	Assistant Professor & Director of Clinical Education	EdD, CMHC	Full-time
Paige Lowe	Assistant Professor	PhD, CMHC	Full-time
Shantelle Tjaden	Assistant Professor	PhD, CMHC	Full-time
Russ Bailey	Associate Professor	PhD	Part-time
Paul Callister	Adjunct Professor	PhD, CMHC	Affiliate
Jenny Jarvis	Adjunct Professor	CMHC	Affiliate
Abigail Morrison	Adjunct Professor	ACMHC	Affiliate
Meg Radunich	Adjunct Professor	CMHC	Affiliate

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*Questions or feedback? Contact Carrie Merino, PhD, CMHC — Program Director — cmerino@uvu.edu*