

Professional Counseling Program

2025-2026 Annual Program Evaluation Report

Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling

Lincoln Memorial University's Professional Counseling Program prepares culturally and ethically competent counselors to serve historically underserved communities in Appalachia and the broader interconnected community. The program includes CACREP-accredited entry-level specialized practice areas in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling. Both specialized practice areas are 60-credit-hour programs and include a common counseling core, concentration-specific coursework, practicum, internship, assessment of student learning, and professional dispositions review.

This report summarizes the program evaluation cycle covering Summer 2025, Fall 2025, and Spring 2026. Summer 2026 data are treated as part of the subsequent annual evaluation cycle. The report is organized to address CACREP 2024 Standards 2.E and 2.F.3 by summarizing program evaluation results and Academic Quality Indicators (AQIs), documenting data-informed curriculum and program improvements, and identifying other significant program changes. All currently available student-learning, disposition, graduate-outcome, and fieldwork-placement information for the reporting cycle has been incorporated. For the 2025-2026 cycle, all students requiring practicum and internship placement in both Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling were successfully placed. Historical program records did not document a program-established minimum fieldwork placement-rate threshold for that cycle; therefore, the results are reported as collected without assigning a retrospective threshold or Met/Not Met determination. Corrective action for future cycles is identified in Section 4. Lincoln Memorial University does not offer a CACREP-accredited doctoral Counselor Education and Supervision program; doctoral-level reporting is not applicable.

1. Program Evaluation Results and Academic Quality Indicators

The program evaluates student learning and program effectiveness through course-embedded key assignments, aligned rubrics, Watermark reports, practicum and internship evaluations, program outcome measures, and stakeholder feedback. During 2025-2026, the program implemented the CACREP 2024 Standards across its Student Learning Goals, assessment mapping, key assignments, rubrics, and annual evaluation processes.

Aggregate Student Learning / KPI Achievement

For CACREP-aligned rubric measures, the primary program benchmark was that at least 80% of candidates achieve the designated performance level (generally a score of 3, Above Sufficient). Where only course-grade data were available, the OAR used the documented alternative benchmark that at least 80% of candidates earn 80% or higher on the assessed measure. The table below summarizes the 2025-2026 findings used in the OAR.

Student Learning Area	2025-2026 Aggregate Evidence Summary	Status
1. Professional Orientation and Ethical Practice	COUN 501 Fall 2025 course-grade results: Ethical Case Study Analysis (N=11), mean 94.18%, 10/11 (90.91%) earned $\geq 80\%$; Professional Resource Portfolio - Google Site (10 numerical grades displayed), mean 85.10%, 9/10 (90.00%) earned $\geq 80\%$; Interview a Counselor (N=11), mean 98.00%, 11/11 (100%) earned $\geq 80\%$. COUN 593: mean 2.99, 99.31% Above Sufficient. COUN 699 Summer 2025 (N=8): 100% Pass on required documentation.	Met
2. Social and Cultural Identities and Experiences	COUN 531 Acculturative Experience: mean 3.97; 97.06% Above Sufficient. Cultural Immersion Paper: 100% Above Sufficient. COUN 621 supporting evidence: 100%.	Met
3. Lifespan Development	COUN 581 combined: mean 2.91; 94.35% Above Sufficient. COUN 551 combined: mean 2.80; 80.12% Above Sufficient. COUN 687: 6/6 earned 80% or higher on both major measures.	Met
4. Career Development	COUN 521 Career Self-Exploration and Career Counseling Handbook: mean 3.00; 100% Above Sufficient on both measures.	Met
5. Counseling Practice and Relationships	COUN 541 Role Play: mean 2.45; 68.19% Above Sufficient. Case Study: mean 2.75; 75.00%. Stronger field/supporting evidence: COUN 593 99.31%; COUN 621, COUN 651, and COUN 699 100%.	Met overall; COUN 541 targeted for improvement
6. Group Counseling and Group Work	COUN 631 Parent Group: 11/11 earned 80% or higher; average 97.64%. Reflection measures also met benchmark. COUN 698 available group-leadership evidence: 100% met.	Met

Student Learning Area	2025-2026 Aggregate Evidence Summary	Status
7. Assessment and Diagnostic Processes	COUN 662: mean 2.94; 93.34% Above Sufficient. COUN 669: mean 2.92; 91.67%. COUN 671 overall 87.14%, but one diagnostic/intervention criterion was 70%. COUN 577 Research Paper: 16.67% Above Sufficient.	Partially met
8. Research and Program Evaluation	COUN 651: mean 3.00; 100% Above Sufficient. EDUC 511 data for six Professional Counseling students: 100% Sufficient or Above Sufficient across assessed criteria.	Met
9. School Counseling	COUN 508 portfolio and research paper: mean 3.00; 100% Above Sufficient. COUN 698 Spring 2026 available completed internship evidence: 100% Above Sufficient / requirement met.	Met for available evidence
10. Clinical Mental Health Counseling	Strong results in COUN 651 (100%), COUN 662 (93.34%), COUN 669 (91.67%), and COUN 699 (100%); lower results in COUN 509 (57.89% Above Sufficient) and COUN 577 (58.34% across available measures).	Partially met

Trend Analysis and Interpretation

The 2025-2026 cycle is the program's first annual evaluation cycle using the fully revised CACREP 2024 Student Learning Goal and KPI structure. Prior OARs were reviewed for continuity, but direct KPI-to-KPI trend comparisons are limited because the assessment architecture, mappings, and reporting conventions changed. Within the 2025-2026 data, the strongest and most consistent performance appeared in career development, group counseling, research/program evaluation, and field-based performance. Targeted lower performance was concentrated in selected COUN 541 counseling-skills measures, COUN 509, COUN 577, and one COUN 671 diagnostic/intervention-planning criterion. These patterns directly informed the improvement priorities described later in this report. The 2025-2026 results will serve as the baseline for longitudinal KPI trend analysis under the revised assessment system.

Professional Dispositions

The disposition assessment confirmed for the 2025-2026 reporting cycle was completed in COUN 541 during Fall 2025 for 15 students. Across nine disposition items, 135 item-level ratings were recorded: 114 ratings (84.4%) were at the highest level, 18 (13.3%) were at the middle level, and 3 (2.2%) were at the lowest level. Ten of the 15 students earned the maximum total score of 18, and 13 of 15 earned total scores from 16 through 18.

The Assessment Committee confirmed that no additional disposition assessments from COUN 593, COUN 698, or COUN 699 were on file for Summer 2025, Fall 2025, or Spring 2026. Therefore, Fall 2025 COUN 541 is the only confirmed disposition assessment for this reporting cycle, and no multi-point aggregate is reported. Summer 2026 COUN 631 and COUN 698 dispositions belong to the 2026-2027 cycle. Beginning with that cycle, the program will strengthen systematic collection, retention, and aggregation of disposition results across established transition points.

Graduate Outcome Academic Quality Indicators

The most recent completed CACREP Vital Statistics data available to the Professional Counseling Program are from the 2024-2025 reporting cycle. Because the subsequent Vital Statistics reporting cycle had not yet occurred at the time of this annual evaluation report, the 2024-2025 results represent the program's most recent completed graduate-outcome data for this report. The 2024-2025 OAR documented a 90% minimum threshold for School Counseling Praxis and Mental Health Counseling NCE performance. The most recent credentialing results of 91-100% met that documented threshold for both specialized practice areas. The program also reports the most recent degree-completion and employment/doctoral-admission outcomes below. No documented program-established minimum threshold was identified in the applicable historical evaluation records for degree completion or employment/doctoral admission during that reporting cycle. Accordingly, those outcomes are reported as collected without assigning a Met/Not Met determination after the fact.

Required Graduate Outcome AQI	Program Minimum Threshold	Most Recent Completed Result	Status
Credentialing exam - CMHC	90%	91-100% licensure/certification examination pass-rate range (2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics)	Met
Credentialing exam - School Counseling	90%	91-100% Praxis passing/completion rate (2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics)	Met

Required Graduate Outcome AQI	Program Minimum Threshold	Most Recent Completed Result	Status
Degree completion - CMHC	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the applicable 2024-2025 reporting cycle	22.73% (5 graduates; 2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison
Degree completion - School Counseling	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the applicable 2024-2025 reporting cycle	66.67% (4 graduates; 2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison
Employment/doctoral admission - CMHC	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the applicable 2024-2025 reporting cycle	91-100% combined employment/doctoral admission rate (2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison
Employment/doctoral admission - School Counseling	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the applicable 2024-2025 reporting cycle	91-100% combined employment/doctoral admission rate (2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison

Threshold interpretation note. For degree completion and employment/doctoral admission, no documented program-established minimum threshold was identified for the applicable 2024-2025 reporting cycle. The available outcome data are therefore reported as collected, but a Met/Not Met determination is not assigned because a threshold should not be established retrospectively after the outcome is known.

CACREP terminology note. The phrase "employment/doctoral admission" is CACREP's graduate-outcome reporting category. It refers to whether graduates are employed and/or pursue doctoral study after graduation; it does not indicate that Lincoln Memorial University's Professional Counseling Program offers a doctoral counseling program. LMU's accredited Professional Counseling Program includes the entry-level Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling specialized practice areas.

Fieldwork Placement Academic Quality Indicator

CACREP Standard 2.E.4 requires aggregate achievement of a program-established minimum threshold for student placement rates at practicum and internship sites. Placement rate is distinct from successful completion of fieldwork hours or satisfactory clinical evaluation. For the 2025-2026 reporting cycle, the Clinical Mental Health Counseling fieldwork cohort included six students in Fall 2025 practicum and six students in Spring 2026 internship. All six students were successfully placed for practicum and all six were successfully placed for internship. School Counseling fieldwork during the same reporting cycle included two students in Fall 2025 practicum, one student in Spring 2026 practicum, and two students in Spring 2026 internship. All three School Counseling students requiring practicum placement and both students requiring internship placement were successfully placed. Historical program records did not document a program-established minimum placement-rate threshold for the 2025-2026 cycle. This is identified as an evaluation-process gap to be corrected prospectively rather than by assigning a threshold after the results are known.

Fieldwork AQI	Minimum Threshold	2025-2026 Placement Result	Status
Practicum placement rate - CMHC	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the 2025-2026 reporting cycle	6 of 6 successfully placed (100%)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison
Practicum placement rate - School Counseling	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the 2025-2026 reporting cycle	3 of 3 successfully placed (100%)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison

Fieldwork AQI	Minimum Threshold	2025-2026 Placement Result	Status
Internship placement rate - CMHC	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the 2025-2026 reporting cycle	6 of 6 successfully placed (100%)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison
Internship placement rate - School Counseling	No documented program-established minimum threshold identified for the 2025-2026 reporting cycle	2 of 2 successfully placed (100%)	Reported; no historical threshold available for Met/Not Met comparison

Fieldwork placement results were therefore 100% across both specialized practice areas: Clinical Mental Health Counseling practicum, 6 of 6; Clinical Mental Health Counseling internship, 6 of 6; School Counseling practicum, 3 of 3; and School Counseling internship, 2 of 2. Because no program-established minimum placement-rate threshold was documented for the 2025-2026 cycle, the results are reported as collected without assigning a retrospective Met/Not Met determination. Beginning with the 2026-2027 evaluation cycle, the program will establish and document a minimum threshold before results are evaluated and will maintain the placement data needed to calculate and report the fieldwork placement AQI consistently.

Clinical supervision documentation supports the program's fieldwork monitoring. For Fall 2025 Clinical Mental Health Counseling practicum, Dr. Smelcer provided one hour of weekly triadic supervision to the six students in three pairs, and the LMU faculty member provided weekly group supervision for 1.5 hours with all six students together. During Clinical Mental Health Counseling internship, site supervisors provided at least one hour of individual supervision each week and the LMU faculty member provided weekly 1.5-hour group supervision. Students from different sections were not combined, and practicum and internship students were supervised separately. Watermark supervision-hour logs and supervision agreements provide supporting documentation. School Counseling supervision was likewise structured with site-supervisor individual supervision and weekly LMU faculty group supervision, with practicum and internship groups maintained separately.

Additional Program Indicators

The OAR also monitors enrollment and retention as program-level indicators. The 2025-2026 target was to maintain or increase incoming cohort enrollment and retain at least 80% of students from fall to spring. Final comparable institutional results for the OAR cycle were not verified when the OAR was completed, so these indicators remain pending and are reported separately from CACREP's minimum graduate-outcome and fieldwork AQIs.

CACREP reporting note: Standard 2.E.3 (Diverse Learning Community) is currently temporarily suspended by CACREP; therefore, it is not treated as a required AQI for this Midcycle Review.

2. Data-Informed Curriculum and Program Improvements

Program evaluation findings were used to identify areas of strength, areas requiring continued monitoring, and specific improvement actions. The program distinguishes changes implemented during 2025-2026 from improvement priorities identified for continued work.

Implemented during 2025-2026

- COUN 501 Professional Orientation and Ethics continued its key assignments with expanded emphasis on counselor self-care and wellness. Fall 2025 course-grade results for the Ethical Case Study Analysis, Professional Resource Portfolio - Google Site, and Interview a Counselor assignment each met the program's alternative course-grade benchmark.
- COUN 541 Counseling Skills added a five-hour community service-learning component in which candidates engaged with professional and school counselors around professional disclosure, ethical boundaries, self-care, and advocacy for professional wellness; these experiences were integrated into course discussion and instructor feedback.
- COUN 593 Practicum, COUN 698 School Counseling Internship, and COUN 699 Clinical Mental Health Counseling Internship expanded professional-counselor wellness and skill development through student-led workshop activity beginning in Spring 2026, including self-care, burnout prevention, advocacy, and coping interventions.
- The program revised Student Learning Goals, key-assignment alignment, rubrics, curriculum mapping, and assessment reporting to implement the CACREP 2024 Standards and strengthened Watermark-supported data collection and annual reporting processes.
- Practicum and internship processes continued to strengthen student readiness review, site-supervisor communication, documentation, supervision, ethical practice, field-based evaluation, and systematic monitoring of clinical performance.

Improvement priorities identified from 2025-2026 findings

- Counseling skills instruction: increase structured role-play practice, faculty modeling, formative feedback, theory-to-practice application, and readiness support before practicum in response to lower COUN 541 results.
- Assessment and diagnostic preparation: strengthen assessment-informed diagnosis and intervention planning, addiction and co-occurring-disorder content, assessment selection and interpretation, and written case conceptualization in response to COUN 577 and COUN 671 findings.
- Clinical Mental Health Counseling preparation: strengthen clinical mental health counseling models, roles and settings, credentialing, addiction foundations, co-occurring disorders, treatment planning, psychopharmacology integration, and scholarly writing in response to COUN 509 and COUN 577 results.
- Comprehensive examination readiness: continue CPCE preparation, advising, study supports, academic support planning, and centralized outcome monitoring.

- Fieldwork data and supervision documentation: establish and document a program-established minimum threshold for practicum and internship placement rates before the next annual evaluation cycle; maintain consistent counts of students requiring placement and students successfully placed so the fieldwork placement AQI can be calculated and reported; and strengthen Watermark documentation. Beginning Fall 2026, the program is also requiring triadic supervision forms when triadic supervision is provided at field sites to improve documentation consistency.

3. Other Significant Program Changes

- Implementation of the CACREP 2024 Standards during the 2025-2026 academic year, including revised Student Learning Goals, assessment mapping, key-assignment alignment, rubrics, and reporting structure.
- Continued strengthening of electronic assessment and instructional infrastructure through Watermark, Canvas, Turnitin, SchoolSims, and related processes supporting data collection, academic integrity, student learning, and accreditation reporting.
- Expanded stakeholder engagement through the Professional Counseling Advisory Board, site-supervisor and field-placement communication, student feedback, faculty review, and community engagement. Feedback themes included graduate readiness, documentation, ethics, professional identity, burnout prevention, trauma complexity, co-occurring concerns, and training needs.
- Continued development of clinical training oversight through review of practicum and internship performance, site-supervisor credentials and feedback, placement documentation, supervision records, student readiness, and field-placement quality.

4. Priorities for the 2026-2027 Evaluation Cycle

- Continue using the 2024-2025 CACREP Vital Statistics as the most recent completed graduate-outcome cycle until the next CACREP Vital Statistics reporting cycle. Establish and document program minimum thresholds for degree completion and employment/doctoral admission before evaluating the next applicable outcome cycle, and retain the 90% credentialing-examination threshold unless revised through program evaluation.
- Establish and document a program-established minimum threshold for practicum and internship placement rates before the next annual evaluation cycle and maintain consistent placement data needed to calculate and report fieldwork placement AQIs by specialized practice area.
- Strengthen systematic disposition assessment across multiple transition points and incorporate Summer 2026 COUN 631 and COUN 698 results into the 2026-2027 annual evaluation cycle.
- Use the 2025-2026 revised KPI structure as the longitudinal baseline and build multi-year trend analysis as comparable data accumulate.
- Continue improving Watermark data-entry consistency, benchmark reporting, and faculty use of assessment evidence.
- Monitor revised CACREP 2024 key assignments and rubrics across the curriculum and continue targeted improvement in counseling skills, assessment/diagnosis, treatment planning, clinical documentation, and specialized-practice preparation.
- Continue strengthening practicum and internship partnerships, supervisor communication, clinical readiness processes, fieldwork placement tracking, supervision documentation, and use of stakeholder feedback for program improvement. Beginning Fall 2026, retain triadic supervision documentation forms in addition to supervision agreements and Watermark supervision-hour records when triadic supervision is provided at field sites.