



Northern Illinois University

Your Future. Our Focus.

Master's in Counseling
Student Handbook

Counseling and Higher Education | 815-753-1448 | cedu.niu.edu/cahe

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WELCOME

Congratulations on embarking on an advanced degree in the field of professional counseling. Northern Illinois University (NIU) takes pride in providing master's degree counselor education programs that will prepare students for careers in school counseling and clinical mental health counseling. Throughout this program, students will develop their counseling skills and professionalism. This handbook is a key resource for counseling program graduate students. It provides key policies, procedures, and other important information about successful completion of this program.

MISSION STATEMENT FOR THE M.S.ED. IN COUNSELING PROGRAMS

The counseling faculty are committed to preparing multiculturally competent counseling professionals for school, community and higher education settings who can facilitate positive change in the development and interactions of diverse individuals throughout their lifespans. The faculty are also committed to the generation and application of knowledge about counseling and related issues and techniques.

THE COUNSELING FACULTY

The faculty offer the benefits of their diverse backgrounds and varied educational, occupational, and professional organization experiences. All faculty members are active in professional associations such as the American Counseling Association and its divisions, the Illinois Counseling Association and its divisions, Chi Sigma Iota, and the National Board for Certified Counselors.

Suzanne Degges-White, Ph.D., LCPC is department chair and professor who received her Doctorate in counseling and counselor education, graduate certificate in women's studies, Master of Science in counseling from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, Master of Science in counseling, and Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Degges-White is a licensed counselor whose focus includes working with individuals and families facing transitions. Her academic research explores development over the life span with a strong focus on women's relationships and women's developmental transitions. She is a past president of the Association for Adult Development and Aging, a division of the American Counseling Association. She has also served on the American Counseling Association's Governing Council.

Melissa J. Fickling, Ph.D., LCPC, ACS is an associate professor and current counseling program coordinator. She joined the NIU faculty in 2017. She completed her doctoral work in counseling and counselor education in 2015 at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and her master's degree in counseling at Roosevelt University. Her primary research interests include the intersections of work, mental health, and meaning. She also conducts research in the areas of clinical supervision and career counseling. Fickling has practiced professional counseling in higher education, community, and private practice settings. She currently provides mental health counseling to adults with co-occurring substance use and mental health concerns. She is a licensed

clinical professional counselor in Illinois (#180.008071). Her clinical interests include adult career transition, grief and loss, identity, and spiritual issues. She is an Associate Editor for *NCDA Career Convergence* and an editorial board member for *ACES Teaching Practice Briefs*. Fickling was the 2016-2017 Edwin L. Herr fellow for Chi Sigma Iota and 2020 recipient of the National Career Development Association's Diversity Initiatives Award.

Yenitza Z. Guzman, Ph.D., LPC, NCC, PEL is a clinical assistant professor at Northern Illinois University. She earned her PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision from Governors State University in August 2022. She received her Master of Arts in School Counseling from Governors State University and her Bachelor of Arts in Teaching of English from the University of Illinois at Chicago. Guzman comes to NIU with over a decade of clinical experience working with youth in Chicago Public Schools. She also has experience teaching a variety of graduate courses in both the school counseling and clinical mental health counseling programs. Her primary research interests include advocacy in the school counseling profession, multicultural issues, and intersection of the parent-child relationship in counseling. Guzman has presented at both local and international conferences.

Kimberly A. Hart, Ph.D., LPC, PEL:SC, NCC, ACS serves NIU as the Counseling Programs Admissions Coordinator, Director of the Community Counseling Training Center, and Coordinator of Field-based Experiences in counseling. Hart came to NIU with 10 years of group facilitation experience working with children, adolescents and adults of diverse backgrounds. She has presented over a two dozen presentations at national, regional and state conferences in areas such as experiential education, adventure-based counseling, cross-cultural facilitation, multiculturalism in counseling and the culture of counselor preparation programs. Hart specialized in clinical mental health counseling, school counseling and consultation, clinical supervision in counselor education, and mental health first aid.

Hart served as Illinois Counseling Association President in 2019 to 2020 as part of her four-year president's term beginning in 2017 as president-elect elect. She has held office in the Illinois Counselors Association under the Illinois Association for Specialist in Group work as well as Illinois Counselors for Social Justice. Hart is a past recipient of the Illinois Counselor Educators and Supervisors Site Supervisor of the Year Award, Mental Health First Aid Maximus Instruction Training Award, Illinois Association for Specialists in Group Work Beverly Brown Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Field of Group Counseling, and the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women Outstanding Women Award. Hart continues to conduct research on multiculturalism and cultural inclusion among counseling professionals with an emphasis on increasing multicultural consciousness and curiosity.

Dana T. Isawi, Ph.D. is an assistant professor of counseling and the CACREP liaison at Northern Illinois University. She joined the NIU faculty in 2017. Isawi holds a Ph.D. in counselor education and supervision from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and a master's degree in school counseling from Marymount University. She has experience in teaching a variety of graduate courses in mental health counseling, school counseling and play therapy as well as providing supervision for graduate students. Isawi has clinical experience in the school and community settings both locally and internationally. Her professional experience also includes counseling intervention development, implementation, and evaluation. Isawi's research interests include multicultural and social justice issues in counseling, especially on the traumatic experiences of refugees and counselors working with trauma survivors. She also conducts research on cultural

humility in counselor education and supervision. Her presentations also focus on cultural considerations in play therapy and in working with families from diverse backgrounds.

Injung Lee, Ph.D., NCC, joined the Department of Counseling and Higher Education in Fall 2022. Prior to joining Northern Illinois University, she was an assistant professor at Purdue University Northwest. She received her Ph.D. in Counselor Education and Supervision from the University of Iowa in 2019. Lee worked with school-aged individuals and young adults in diverse settings, including K-12 schools, a youth counseling center, and a university counseling center. Her research interests include professional identity development of counselors-in-training, ethnic/cultural minority populations in counselor education, as well as trauma-informed teaching. Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, Lee has been actively publishing in peer-reviewed counseling journals, including *Counselor Education and Supervision* and *Journal of Counseling and Development*. She has served on the editorial boards of *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*, *Journal of International Students*, and *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling*. She has also served as a regional facilitator for the International Students and Faculty Interest Network (ISFIN) at ACES since 2018. She was an emerging leader of ACES (2017) and NCACES (2018), and an editorial fellow of *Counselor Education and Supervision* (2020-2021) journal.

Timothy "T.J." Schoonover, PhD, LPC (AR, IL), PEL:SC, RPT, NCC is an assistant professor at Northern Illinois University. He completed his doctoral work at University of Arkansas in July 2021 and his master's degree in counseling at Northern Illinois University in May 2017. His primary research interests focus on childhood trauma, play therapy, school counseling, creative counseling supervision interventions, and the development of counseling students. Dr. Schoonover's primary clinical work has been at community mental health organizations working with children and adolescents. Additionally, his school counseling experience has been at title 1 elementary schools and schools for children who have been exposed to trauma. He has received grants from the Association for Specialists in Group Work and the North Central Association for Counselor Education and Supervision to further his research agenda. Additionally, he was the recipient of the 2022 Humanistic Dissertation Award from the Association for Humanistic Counseling.

Peitao Zhu, PhD, NCC joined the NIU faculty in Fall 2020. He received his Ph.D. in Counseling and Counselor Education from Syracuse University. Professor Zhu's research agenda is most focused on cultural humility and its implication in counseling and counselor education, while expanding his scholarship in group work, counselor education pedagogy, and theoretical/philosophical issues in counseling. He is passionate about a broad range of quantitative and qualitative methodologies and has been publishing actively and consistently in indexed, competitive counseling and counseling-related journals such as the *Counselor Education and Supervision*, *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*, and *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. Professor Zhu serves on the editorial board of several top-rated journals, such as the *Journal for Counseling and Development* and *Journal for Specialists in Group Work*. Professor Zhu has been awarded numerous research grants by national counseling organizations and received various recognitions such as an ACES Emerging Leader (2021) and NYU Steinhardt Faculty-First Look Scholar (2019-2020). Professor Zhu is a National Certified Counselor (NCC); he has a particular clinical interest in complex trauma and adopts a relationally-focused approach to his counseling work.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of students to know and observe all regulations and procedures relating to the program they are pursuing, as well as those of the university and [Graduate School](#). In no case will a regulation be waived or an exception granted due to lack of awareness. Questions about regulations and their interpretation pertaining to studies at the graduate level should be addressed to the office of the dean of the Graduate School if an answer is not found through the student's advisor, program coordinator, or Chair of the CAHE Department.

Students must satisfy the degree requirements of the catalog for the term they were admitted and began coursework in the degree program; or they may, with the consent of their advisors, meet graduation requirements by complying with the degree requirements of a later catalog. Students readmitted to a degree program must meet degree requirements of the catalog in force at the time of the later admission (or of a subsequent catalog, as provided above). Aside from degree requirements, all students are subject to the regulations and policies stated in the catalog currently in force. Exceptions to regulations and requirements contained in the Graduate Catalog require the written approval of the office of the dean of the [Graduate School](#), unless otherwise stated in the catalog.

APPLY FOR GRADUATION

All MSEd candidates must apply for graduation. The deadline to apply for graduation is typically several months before the date of graduation. See deadlines here: [Graduation Information - NIU - The Graduate School](#). Students may defer their graduation if they apply and later need to push back their completion date.

PROGRAM ACCREDITATIONS

The Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) has awarded accreditation to the M.S.Ed. and PhD programs in Counseling at NIU. Professional accreditation signifies program quality and breadth of exposure to content needed to become an ethical and competent practitioner. Further, graduation from a CACREP accredited counseling master's program ensures a smooth pathway to professional counseling licensure in the state of Illinois (and many other states as well – [see full listing](#)). The counseling program has maintained continuous CACREP accreditation since 1987. Current and prospective students are urged to log onto the [CACREP website](#) in order to learn more about CACREP's history and mission.

MASTER'S DEGREE IN COUNSELING

The counseling program at NIU offers strong didactic and experiential coursework; varied theoretical approaches; a quality faculty who value research, inquiry, and professional involvement; and well-equipped training facilities. We adhere to the professional values outlined in the ACA Code of Ethics (2014, p. 3):

1. enhancing human development throughout the life span;
2. honoring diversity and embracing a multicultural approach in support of the worth, dignity, potential, and uniqueness of people within their social and cultural contexts;
3. promoting social justice;

4. safeguarding the integrity of the counselor-client relationship; and
5. practicing in a competent and ethical manner

Master's students in the counseling program are working toward a degree of Master of Science in Education in clinical mental health counseling or Master of Science in Education in school counseling. Each specialization requires specific courses related to that area of preparation. Students will meet with their advisor in their first semester of the program to confirm their program of study.

The MSEd degrees provide graduates with entry-level skills to work as professional counselors in clinical mental health settings or K-12 schools. This 60-semester hour program consists of three components: 1) Core curriculum, 2) Supervised practicum and internship and, 3) Specialized courses and electives.

PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE AND CERTIFICATION

Because NIU's master's counseling programs are CACREP accredited, all graduates are eligible to apply for and take the National Counselor Examination (NCE), which is the required exam to become a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) in Illinois. With 3,360 hours of supervised clinical experience after graduation — 1,920 of which are direct client contact — and passing the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE), you would be eligible to apply for the Clinical Professional Counselor license in Illinois (LCPC). The LCPC credential is required for independent practice as a professional counselor and to qualify for third-party reimbursement. More information about licensing follows within this handbook and in your required coursework.

Completion of the **school counseling** area of professional preparation allows students to apply for a professional educator license with an endorsement in school counseling (PEL:SC). This license is required for a student to work in the state of Illinois as a professional school counselor. The state of Illinois no longer requires a teaching license as one of the qualifications for school counselor licensure. School counseling candidates must pass the state examination for school counseling ILTS content 181 exam. You may need to meet other criteria when applying for the Professional Educator License.

PROGRAM GOAL

The goal of the counseling program is to prepare professionals with a counselor identity to work as multicultural ethical counselors and advocates. This goal is achieved through successful completion of all requirements.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

Objective 1 - Common core courses

Students will demonstrate mastery of a **common core** of knowledge and skills in counseling. This common core involves coursework in such areas as; a) Human growth and development, b) Social and cultural foundations, c) Groups, d) Career and lifestyle development, e) Research and program evaluation, f) Professional orientation, and g) Appraisal. Specific courses that comprise the common core are indicated below.

Objective 2 - Experiential courses

Students will demonstrate effective use of counseling skills for a selected setting.

Objective 3 - Specialization courses

Students will demonstrate mastery of knowledge and skills in a selected area of professional preparation (12 hours in clinical mental health counseling or school counseling coursework and electives).

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Counseling core

The eight common core areas, as defined by our accrediting body (CACREP), represent foundational knowledge required of entry-level counselor education graduates. Therefore, counselor education programs must document where standards are covered in the curriculum (from [CACREP Standards, 2016](#)).

In the entry level curriculum at NIU, we cover the common core standards in the following major domains: professional orientation and identity, counseling ethics, human growth and development, multiculturalism and social justice, diagnosis of mental health concerns, career development, theories of counseling, counseling skills and helping relationships, group work, couples and families, children and adolescents, assessment, crisis intervention, substance use and addiction, counseling skills, treatment strategies, and research use in counseling practice.

Clinical mental health counseling

Students who are preparing to specialize as clinical mental health counselors will demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to address a wide variety of circumstances within community, agency, higher education, and non-profit settings. ([CACREP Section 5-C Entry Level Specialty Area – Clinical Mental Health Counseling](#)).

School counseling

Students who are preparing to specialize as school counselors will demonstrate the professional knowledge and skills necessary to promote the academic, career and personal/social development of all P–12 students through data-informed school counseling programs. ([CACREP Section 5-G Entry Level Specialty Area – School Counseling](#)).

General Program Outcomes

- Demonstrate knowledge of core training areas in counseling.
- Demonstrate effective counseling competencies.
- Demonstrate general dispositions toward self-reflection and being non-judgmental, and openness to supervision.
- Demonstrate knowledge and skills in a selected area of professional preparation (Clinical Mental Health or School Counseling specialization).
- Demonstrate knowledge of multicultural counseling skills and social justice issues.

Outcome Assessment Methods

- Assignments from core courses (1,4,5)
- Dispositions evaluation (3)
- Counseling Competencies Scale (2,3,5)
- Internship site supervisor evaluation (1-5)
- Portfolio (1,2,3,4)
- Internship Site Supervisor Survey (1-5)
- Graduate Exit Survey (1,4,5)

- Alumni Survey (1,4,5)
- Employer Survey (1-5)
- National Counselor Exam (1)
- Content Exam 181 (4)
- Focus Groups (1,4,5)

PROGRAM INFORMATION

COHORT MODEL

The MSEd counseling program is a *cohort model* with a new cohort starting each fall. Master's students can choose to enroll full time (3 years) or part time (4 years). Students will follow the provided program plans depending on their full or part-time status. Most core classes are offered only once per year. During their Orientation class in their first semester (COUN 500), students will work with their advisor to develop their program of study. If students must deviate from the program plans, they must speak with their advisor to discuss the impact on their program of study.

MATRICULATION REQUIREMENTS

Students may matriculate into the program in the fall semester. Student-at-large enrollment is generally not permitted in core courses. Ongoing matriculation is dependent on successful completion of coursework and maintenance of an adequate GPA. Students must earn a final grade of B or better in all required courses to complete the degree.

ORIENTATION FOR ALL MASTER'S STUDENTS

Each fall semester, incoming students will receive a copy of the up-to-date program handbook. The handbook must be read before the first day of COUN 500 where program orientation will take place. This is a required meeting where students learn more about the program structure, student expectations, and community; student and professional organizations in counseling; and field experience courses.

COURSEWORK

Both the M.S.Ed. in school counseling and the M.S.Ed. in clinical mental health counseling are 60 credit hours, including 39 credit hours from the CACREP Core, nine credit hours of clinical practice, six to nine credit hours of specialization courses, and three to six credit hours of electives.

Common core classes (42 credit hours required)

- COUN 500 – Professional Identity and Ethics in Counseling (3)
- COUN 501 – Diagnosis of Mental Health Issues in Counseling (3)
- COUN 510 – Counseling Skills across the Life span (3)
- COUN 511 – Career Counseling (3)
- COUN 521 – Counseling with Children (3)
- COUN 523 – Evidence Informed Practices in Professional Counseling (3)
- COUN 525 – Counseling Skills and Strategies (3)
- COUN 530 – Counseling Theories (3)
- COUN 533X – Standardized Assessment Testing in Counseling (3)

COUN 540 – Group Counseling (3)
COUN 565 – Multicultural and Social Justice Counseling (3)
COUN 567 – Substance Use and Addictions in Counseling (3)
COUN 593 – Crisis Intervention for Counselors (3)
COUN 784X – Theoretical Foundations of Family Therapy (3)

Clinical practice (9 credit hours)

COUN 550 – Practicum in Counseling (3)

NOTE: Practicum requires a minimum of 100 clock hours, of which 40 must be direct client contact clock hours

COUN 586 – Counseling Internship (6)

NOTE: Internship requires a minimum of 600 clock hours, of which 240 must be direct client contact hours.

*More detailed information about these clinical courses is provided later in this handbook under the heading Supervised Counseling Experiences.

Clinical mental health counseling specialization courses (3 credit hours)

COUN 524 – Clinical Mental Health: Programs, Issues and Practices (3)

School counseling specialization courses (6 credit hours)

COUN 523 – Secondary School Counseling: Programs, Issues, and Practices (3)
COUN 570 – Consultation and Management of School Counseling Programs (3)

Electives (3-6 credit hours)

Electives are periodically offered in the program. Trauma-informed counseling certificate courses count as electives (except for COUN 593 which is a core course for the MSEd) and many students choose to take those to fulfill elective requirements. We also offer Human Sexuality, LGBTQ+ Issues in Counseling, and Religious & Spiritual Issues in Counseling every other summer. Students may also seek electives outside of the department if pre-approved by their advisor.

MULTICULTURAL COUNSELOR DEVELOPMENT

Professional counselors, counselor educators, clinical supervisors, and counselors-in-training are expected to continually engage in personal and professional development as culturally responsive counselors and social change agents. For counselors-in-training, this engagement should occur through both curricular and extra-curricular means. At multiple points during the program, students will be asked to critically reflect on their development as culturally responsive professional counselors, including their awareness of their values, biases, areas for growth, and commitments to promoting social justice.

PROGRAM ADVISING

When a student is admitted into the program, the student will be assigned a faculty advisor. The student will develop a program of study in their first semester, which will be uploaded to the program Blackboard community.

MASTER'S COUNSELING PRACTICUM

An important part of preparation as a counselor includes facilitation of counseling sessions performed under the clinical supervision of a faculty member or experienced professional counselor. In Practicum in Counseling, COUN 550, you will see individual clients in the NIU Community Counseling Training Center (CCTC). School counseling students will also be placed in local schools to earn some of their required practicum hours. Students may also design and co-facilitate a counseling, therapy, or psychoeducational group during their practicum semester. Only after successful completion of the practicum experience may students begin Internship in Counseling, COUN 586. Successful completion means both meeting all hours requirements as well as meeting expectations according to final evaluation by practicum supervisors

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK FOR COUNSELING

The counseling program requires that all practicum applicants submit to a criminal background check. This is consistent with the state law that requires Illinois school districts to conduct criminal background investigations of applicants for certified and non-certified positions, including counseling licensure. This policy was passed unanimously by the counseling faculty, Feb. 17, 2011. Current students MUST complete the CBC prior to beginning COUN 550 Practicum in Counseling. Additionally, specific courses in the counseling program may require that a CBC be completed **prior** to taking the class. These classes are COUN 521 and COUN 533X. This requirement is based on the fact that counseling students are working with persons who are vulnerable, non-adult minors and/or have increased risk for vulnerability. An applicant whose background check results in a status of “no record” may be approved for counseling practicum.

Students may be subject to completion of a post-practicum background check under unique circumstances such as time off between practicum and internship, related student investigation, and/or specific requirements of an internship site. If a student interrupts their program for one semester or longer, a criminal background check may be required upon their reentry. A criminal background check is only good for two years. Thus, completion of more than one background check may be required during the course of a student’s degree program and/or internship experiences. See Appendix C for additional information about the criminal background check requirements and procedures.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COUN 550 COUNSELING PRACTICUM

1. The deadline for request for matriculation into fall practicum is Feb. 15. The deadline request for matriculation into spring practicum is Sept. 15. Practicum is not offered in the summer.
2. Placement request forms are completed and submitted in the program Blackboard community. Late requests may not be accepted. If you need to change the semester in which you wish to complete practicum, you should contact the Field-Experience Coordinator (cahc_internship@niu.edu) to ensure there is availability and that your name is added to the new list. Failure to do so may cause you to have to postpone your practicum experience.
3. Students are required to obtain professional liability insurance prior to seeing any clients during practicum or internship. Currently, student members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) – and potentially other organizations like the American School Counseling Association or the American Mental Health Counseling Association – can obtain free liability

- insurance with their membership. Students must show proof of their insurance at the start of each clinical course and may not counsel a client without meeting this requirement.
4. In the middle of the fall and spring semesters, the entire counseling faculty reviews all candidates for COUN 550. Students are reviewed to determine their overall readiness for a practicum experience. Practicum admission may be delayed in order to allow for the completion of courses or because the faculty may suggest various developmental or remedial requirements for students to reach readiness for practicum.
 5. To satisfy practicum requirements, a minimum of 40 hours of direct client contact must be completed. School specialization practicum counselors will complete 20 of their total 40 counseling hours working with school-aged clients in a school setting. This experience will be facilitated by program faculty.
 6. Practicum is a time-intensive experience. Practicum counseling students work directly with assigned clients (5-6 hours per week), complete client documentation and review session recordings (1-3 hours per week), participate in weekly group supervision (2.-2.5 hours) and weekly individual or triadic supervision (1-1.5 additional hours). Supervision may be held on a different day than the class. Students must **be prepared to come to campus multiple days per week to meet for counseling supervision**. Students who are unable to schedule time for supervision will need to postpone practicum to a semester when they have availability for practicum requirements.
 7. COUN 550 practicum counselors are given a detailed orientation of the [Community Counseling Training Center](#) (CCTC). Students are required to follow center, professional, and ethical guidelines, which include: a) Proper operation of technological equipment, b) Proper attire and behavior, c) Client scheduling, d) Record-keeping, and e) Maintaining client confidentiality. Failure to comply with these guidelines may result in an unsatisfactory grade for practicum and not being approved to advance into internship. The Community Counseling Training Center (CCTC) works to maintain the highest ethical principles and adheres to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements.
 8. Regardless of the number of hours that have already been completed, all practicum counselors must be working with between one and three clients in the CCTC during the practicum class time for the entirety of the semester.

MASTER'S INTERNSHIP

An internship is a supervised learning experience designed to provide students with opportunities to implement knowledge and theory acquired through coursework in actual work settings. Therefore, the core curriculum and other practical coursework must be completed before internship experiences are started.

Internship is a distinctly defined, post-practicum supervised clinical experience intended to enable counselors-in-training to refine and enhance the basic counseling competencies developed during practicum. Internship sites should be sought with student career goals and area of specialization in mind. Internship plans are individually developed by students in cooperation with their site and site supervisor. Sites must be able to provide the diverse and comprehensive experience needed for a successful internship experience (e.g., hours requirements, varied clinical experience, diverse populations, quality clinical supervision).

Students must complete 600 clock hours of counseling internship, of which 240 are direct service provided to clients. Students must complete at least 400 cumulative internship hours in their degree specialization setting and at least 300 cumulative internship hours at their primary internship site. Internship occurs through enrollment in 3 credit hours of COUN 586 in two semesters, for a total of 6 credit hours.

CREATING THE INTERNSHIP PLAN

Through the internship experience, counselors-in-training should learn and experience, under supervision, the roles and responsibilities of professionals employed at the site. In addition, counselors-in-training will have specific professional goals to fulfill during internship experiences. A plan to meet these goals will be developed jointly with the site supervisor and counselor-in-training, with the assistance of the university supervisor if necessary. **Although the goals of individual counselors-in-training will vary, basic internship requirements outlined by the counseling program must also be addressed and included in the student's internship plans:**

- ❖ Learning about characteristics of individuals served by institutions offering counseling services, including, but not limited to the effects of socioeconomic status, unemployment, aging, gender, sexual orientation and sexual preferences, spiritual and/or religious values, race, ethnicity, chronic illness, developmental transitions, interpersonal needs, family context, and community violence.
- ❖ Learning about organizational, fiscal, and legal dimensions of the institutions and settings in which counselors practice.
- ❖ Understanding the theories and techniques of conducting needs assessment to design, implement and evaluate counseling interventions, programs and systems.
- ❖ Understanding the principles of program development and service delivery for clientele based on assumptions of normal development, including, but not limited to prevention, implementation of support groups, peer facilitation, training, parent education, career information and counseling, and encouragement of self-help.
- ❖ Exploring roles of counselors in a variety of practice settings and relationships between counselors and other professionals in these settings.
- ❖ Exploring the requirements for operation, management and support of counseling programs/agencies.

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT COUN 586 COUNSELING INTERNSHIP

1. The deadline for request to matriculate into or continue with internship placement for summer and fall internship is Feb. 15. The deadline for request to matriculate into or continue with internship placement spring internship is Sept. 15.
2. Students are required to obtain professional liability insurance prior to seeing any clients during practicum or internship. Currently, student members of the American Counseling Association (ACA) – and potentially other organizations like the American School Counseling Association or the American Mental Health Counseling Association – can obtain free liability insurance with their membership. Students must show proof of their insurance at the start of each clinical course and may not counsel a client without meeting this requirement.

3. In order to complete the program, each student needs a minimum total of 600 clock hours of internship, 240 of the total clock hours must be direct service hours.
4. The internship supervision seminar class typically meets online every other week during the semester (2-2.5 hours). These seminar meetings include professional development activities, counseling client case presentations, peer consultation, and discussions on internship progress.
5. Responsibility for securing placement at an approved internship site with an approved site supervisor belongs to students. Students are encouraged to begin this process early in their program and should consult with their advisor.

Note that approved sites include (a) locations in which all required and most recommended counseling experiences can be completed and (b) where sample audio recordings of individual counseling can be completed.

Note that an approved site supervisor must (a) hold an earned master's degree in counseling or counseling-related degree program, (b) have a minimum of two years counseling experiences, (c) hold active counseling licensure (LPC, LCPC, LCSW, Licensed Psychologists; PEL:SC required for school internship site supervisors), (d) be trained in providing clinical supervision, (e) be available to provide an average of 1 hour of weekly individual clinical supervision for each NIU intern, and (f) participate in all counseling program expectations, requirements, and evaluation procedures.

Note to students specializing in school counseling: On days when you are performing your internship in the school, you must log a minimum of three consecutive clock hours on site. This requirement affords you an experience that more closely approximates how a school counselor functions day-to-day in their position.

CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Required experiences

- ❖ Intake evaluation: Conducting an intake interview and mental health history for planning counseling interventions.
- ❖ Counseling intervention: Provide individual and group counseling under supervision with diverse client populations that represent the demographic diversity of the agency community.
- ❖ Clinical assessment: Complete at least one biopsychosocial and/or formal mental status client assessments with at least three different clients.
- ❖ Consultation: Document interactions with third-party providers or other agency professionals and how the issues were handled. Consult at with a partner, parent, family member or teacher about a client concern.
- ❖ Crisis response: Review the crisis protocol for your agency. Discuss with your supervisor your role as a counselor-in-training when there is a crisis. Discuss suicide assessment and hospitalization policies at your agency and when applicable initiate client dialogs about suicide ideation in sessions.
- ❖ Client advocacy and/or professional advocacy: Practice effective strategies for client advocacy in public policy and government relations issues.

- ❖ Program evaluation: Create an evaluation plan (conduct if possible) relevant to agency's service delivery including marketing, intake procedures, referral processes, interventions, client follow-up and outcomes, provider training and continued development, provider wellness and efficacy, and other relevant program efficacy and sustainability measures.
- ❖ Professional development: Participate in learning seminars and workshops that are provided for site personnel or attend outside conferences/workshops designed for practicing professionals.

Recommended experiences

- ❖ After-hours/on-call response: Complete at least one on-call shift (as defined by agency policy and procedures) under agency supervision.
- ❖ Case conference/staffing: Observe, participate-in and co-facilitate case presentations and staffing discussions.
- ❖ Community outreach: Observe and participate in community intervention and education characteristic of human service programs and networks in local community (public, private, and volunteer).
- ❖ Case management: Implement effective strategies for promoting client understanding of and access to community resources.
- ❖ Curriculum development: Create or revise (facilitate if possible) at least one prevention group topic relevant to the agency's service provisions. Have someone observe the session and gather feedback from observer. If possible, collect feedback from participants.

SCHOOL COUNSELING

Required experiences

- ❖ Classroom curriculum: Teach at least one developmental counseling class on a topic from one of the three domains. Have someone observe the session and gather feedback from observer. Class presentation may come from your curriculum project. Optional: Collect feedback from students on the session.
- ❖ Group experience: Lead a minimum of four group sessions with a co-leader or on your own. Write up a brief report on the type of group and pertinent information about the group. Optional: Get feedback from group members.
- ❖ Exceptional students: Attend at least two IEP or 504 meetings and discuss with your supervisor the different roles of stakeholders.
- ❖ Assessment and/or evaluation: Spend time talking with your supervisor about doing an assessment at your school that will help bring information about student (or faculty or parent) need to the attention of your counseling program. Build upon what you learned in class. Organize, design, total your findings and report them to the chair or supervisor of the counseling program. Document this on your time sheet and with your university supervisor. Discuss what counselors could do to respond to these needs. Optional: Present this to the principal of the school.
- ❖ Consultation: Document interactions with parents and how the issues were handled. Consult at least once with a teacher over a student/classroom concern.

- ❖ Career counseling: Conduct at least three career counseling sessions. Do these conjointly if necessary. Discuss this experience with your supervisor and in your journals.
- ❖ Crisis plan: Read the crisis plan for your school. Discuss with your supervisor what your role is as a counselor when there is a crisis. Document that you have done this with your university supervisor.
- ❖ Suicide response: Discover what the protocol is for students who are suicidal or talk about suicide ideation in a session. Discuss this with your supervisor.
- ❖ Classroom/teacher visits: Visit at least two representative classes in your school to familiarize yourself with what you don't know about curriculum. Write about these in your journal. You must visit at least two classrooms from varying arenas such as vocational education, physical education, special education, dual credit courses, etc.
- ❖ College counseling: Meet with at least three students to discuss college planning. Write about these in your journal. Consider what resources you need to do this effectively.

Recommended experiences

- ❖ Systems support: Review with supervisor the management activities that establish, maintain and enhance the total guidance and counseling program. Participate in meetings, plans or evaluations of such supports if possible.
- ❖ Educational and employability planning: Administer and interpreting test and inventory results, and assist students with school-to-work transition planning.
- ❖ Professional development: Participate in service training activities, counseling staff meetings and relevant teacher in-service meetings. Attend outside conferences or workshops designed for professional school counselors.

SITE SELECTION AND INTERVIEWS

Lists of counseling internships where previous interns have worked is available in the Counseling Program Blackboard Community. The approval of internship sites is based upon the ability of the site to meet or exceed the CACREP standards and counseling program expectations. These include the kinds of experiences offered, the quality of supervision, the quality of support provided to counselors-in-training, and the ability of the site to provide sufficient direct and indirect hours to interns.

Counseling interns work in a variety of internship sites. Sites may include addiction treatment centers, community mental health agencies, universities and community colleges, youth services agencies, K-12 schools, career centers, and others counseling provider settings. Private practice is not approved as a primary internship site. You are encouraged to interview with supervisors from more than one setting to insure compatibility between your goals and the potential experience in the setting. You need to prepare carefully for the interview just as you would for permanent employment searches. You should prepare the following materials for your internship site application and to take with you to interviews:

1. Cover letter that clarifies professional goals and career interests.
2. Résumé outlining education, training, professional experiences and transferable skills.

Some sites may require initial placement contact from university faculty or staff; however, the faculty does not place counselors-in-training with internship sites. The advisor and internship coordinator must approve sites, although it is the responsibility of the site and/or site supervisor to accept or reject prospective interns.

Policy on internships in private practice settings

Master's students in the NIU counseling program are not permitted to use private practice site placements for completion of counseling internship experiences. A private practice is defined by the Professional Counselor and Clinical Professional Counselor Licensing and Practice Act (2012) in the state of Illinois as "the application of clinical professional counseling knowledge and skills by a licensed clinical professional counselor who regulates and is responsible for their own practice or treatment procedures." If students are unsure if their desired site location qualifies as private practice, they should request a meeting with their advisor and/or the internship coordinator to consult on the appropriateness of an internship site.

APPLYING FOR INTERNSHIP

You must complete the counseling internship application request form and submit it to the internship committee via Blackboard NIU Counseling Program Community. Applications are reviewed by the full faculty.

- Fill out Part One of the COUN 586 Internship Application before the semester deadlines below. We use part one to verify students' intent to register for internship.
 - **Summer/fall internship — no later than Feb. 15.**
 - **Spring internship — no later than Sept. 15.**
- School Counseling Part One applications should include the attachment of their passing Content 235 or 181 scores.
- Submission of the Part Two internship application is required before registration permits for MyNIU enrollment will be issued. Typical permit submission deadlines are Dec. 15 for spring semester and May 15 for summer/fall semesters.
- If you intend to begin internship before the start of NIU internship seminar meetings, you must notify your advisor and university supervisor in writing to inform the department of your plans, and your site supervisor must sign a letter on their agency/school letterhead. Interns must attach this to the Blackboard Community MSEd Internship page. This letter is to express the site's willingness to take full responsibility for you and your clinical work during that time frame. Your internship plan agreement must detail the date your internship will officially begin.
- Complete an internship plan agreement before your internship begins. You should meet with your site supervisor to develop your plan. This plan should be as specific as possible, including time you will spend at on-site, various activities in which you intend to participate, outside events that you plan on attending, plans to complete required internship experiences and other goals and objectives.

ADDITIONAL NOTES ABOUT INTERNSHIP:

- Internship applications, plans, hours tracking, live observations, evaluations and other internship documentation must be completed separately for each semester in which counselors-in-training intend to enroll in COUN 586 internship.
- If you complete internship at two sites, you must complete two separate plans, two separate sets of hours tracking, and have midterm and final evaluations completed by both site supervisors.
- Although you may use the same plan contents if continuing at the same internship site beyond one semester, (provided you are performing the same duties/activities), you must provide new copies with amended dates for the specific and current NIU semester. If any duties change, or if you are going to a new site, you must create a new plan.
- School counseling interns must commit themselves to a minimum of three consecutive hours per day at their site. Occasionally, school counseling students opt to perform 200 internship hours at an agency that serves youth.

SCHOOL COUNSELING SPECIALIZATION: CONTENT AREA TEST (235)

According to [Public Act 097-0607: An Act Concerning Education](#), as of July 1, 2012:

All applicants seeking a state license shall be required to pass a test of content area knowledge for each area of endorsement for which there is an applicable test. There shall be no exception to this requirement. No candidate shall be allowed to student teach, serve as the teacher of record or begin an internship or residency required for licensure until he or she has passed the applicable content area test (Sec. 21B-30; d).

School counseling interns are subject to teacher law in Illinois and must complete and pass the Content 235 or 181 Test for school counselors prior to the start of counseling internship. NIU's counseling program policy is that students **pass the Content 235 or 181 exam prior to submitting application for internship** (see above for internship application deadlines). See visit our [counseling student resources licensure and certification webpage](#) for frequently asked questions about school counselor examinations and licensure preparations.

MASTER'S INTERNSHIP ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance at both individual site and group university supervision (COUN 586) is required. During each semester interns are enrolled for internship credit (COUN 586), students must attend internship seminar meetings. Failure to attend these meetings may result in an unsatisfactory grade for that semester of internship, even if the student is doing satisfactory work at their site. Absences will be monitored by the university supervisor and make-up supervision may be required for any missed sessions.

Students who have completed at least two full semesters at the same site and/or are not contracted with their site(s) for a full NIU internship semester may petition for modification of seminar attendance requirements. These exceptions must be approved by the Field Placement Coordinator, University Supervisor, Program Coordinator, and student's advisor. The student is required to develop a plan that may include not attending the seminar during the part of the semester where clinical experience is not taking place.

CAPSTONE PROJECT AND PRESENTATIONS

In your last semester of internship, you will prepare a capstone paper and brief presentation to be delivered in 586 group supervision. The capstone paper summarizes an individual student's work, progress, achievements, and personal growth. The overall purpose of this culminating assignment is to provide students an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and skills, integrate their learning across counseling courses, and reflect upon their growth as professional counselors-in-training. The process will help students identify strengths as well as areas of professional development in which they want to continue to grow.

CONTENTS

Portfolio sections include:

- Articulation of my theory of change
- Exemplar of theory in practice during internship
- Discussion of my engagement in assessment and/or research practices
- My personal philosophy and practices in self-care
- Articulation of my social positionality and multicultural development in self-awareness, consciousness, broaching, and humility
- Overall reflections about my experiences across the program from application to preparing for graduation
- My areas for continued growth and aspirations for continued professional development
- Enclosure of current resume

These should each be addressed in a thoughtfully prepared and detailed 6 to 7-page, APA Style (7th edition) paper covering your knowledge, skills, and awareness development across time. Include citations as needed. You may draw from assignments submitted in your graduate counseling coursework to inform your reflections.

PROCEDURES

Students will make an oral presentation on the capstone paper contents in their final semester of internship. Students will provide visual and/or interactive components to support their oral presentation. Electronic copies of the capstone paper will be uploaded to the Blackboard Counseling Program Community and be included as part of the student's official student file.

EVALUATION

Internship university supervisors grade (satisfactory/unsatisfactory) portfolios with input from site supervisors and advisors as needed. For those areas in which a student's capstone project is perceived to be unsatisfactory, the student will be required to modify the project prior to program completion. Students will be provided with the guidelines/rubrics used for evaluation.

TRAUMA INFORMED COUNSELING CERTIFICATE

The certificate of graduate study in trauma-informed counseling is available to any graduate-level student in good standing. This fully online certificate program is designed to enhance master's- or doctoral-level clinician skill in various agency and treatment contexts. Courses focus on

understanding elements of traumatic exposure, common threads of treatment and outcomes, trauma-sensitive care and organizational commitment, crisis intervention, and developmental, exposure-based, experiential and cognitive-behavioral approaches for multiculturally relevant treatment across the life span. See [program website](#) for details.

Requirements:

- COUN 593: Crisis Intervention (3 credits).
- COUN 715: Concepts in Trauma-Informed Counseling (3 credits).
- COUN 716: Counseling for Complex Trauma (3 credits).

One of the following:

- COUN 717: Creative and Experiential Approaches in Trauma-Informed Counseling (3 credits).
- COUN 718: Resiliency and Wellness in Trauma-Informed Counseling (3 credits).
- COUN 590/719: Counseling for Grief and Loss (3 credits).

SELECTED UNIVERSITY AND PROGRAM POLICIES

Students are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the [graduate catalog](#) for their year of matriculation into the program. Below are some university and graduate school policies students need to be aware of. Note that policies may change and students are responsible for obtaining the most up to date information.

ADVISORY SYSTEM

Each student is assigned by their major department an advisor or advisory committee whose purpose is to guide the student's studies and recommend them for the degree when the student is properly qualified. A program of study is formulated by the student, in consultation with the departmentally assigned advisor or advisory committee. See "The Program of Study" for details.

Departmental advisors can assist students in understanding and satisfying departmental and university requirements. However, they are not responsible for informing students of published regulations, such as those in the Graduate School catalog, nor, except as explicitly provided in the catalog, do they have the authority to modify those requirements (see the current [NIU Graduate School catalog](#)).

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are encouraged to attend classes regularly, but individual instructors determine attendance policies for their own classes. The university recognizes that on occasion examinations or other scheduled academic activities may conflict with the religious observances of some members of the academic community, and accordingly encourages the instructional and administrative staff to make reasonable accommodations to minimize the resulting difficulties for individuals concerned. Students faced with such conflicts should notify the appropriate instructor or administrative area as much in advance of the examination or other activity creating the conflict as possible. Students believing that they have been unreasonably denied an educational benefit due to their religious beliefs or practices may bring the matter to the attention of the department chair for resolution. If for any reason this route would not be appropriate, the matter may be brought to the college dean or dean's designee.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Good academic work must be based on honesty. The attempt of any student to present as their own work that which they have not produced is regarded by the faculty and administration as a serious offense. Students are considered to have cheated, for example, if they copy the work of another or use unauthorized notes or other aids during an examination, or turn in as their own a paper or an assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else. Students are guilty of plagiarism, intentional or not, if they copy material from books, magazines or other sources without identifying and acknowledging those sources or if they paraphrase ideas from such sources without acknowledging them. Students guilty of, or assisting others in, either cheating or plagiarism on an assignment, quiz or examination may receive a grade of F for the course involved and may be suspended or dismissed from the university.

A faculty member has original jurisdiction over any instances of academic misconduct that occur in a course which the faculty member is teaching. The student shall be given the opportunity to resolve the matter in meetings with the faculty member and the department chair. If the facts of the incident are not disputed by the student, the faculty member may elect to resolve the matter at that level by levying a sanction no greater than an F for that course. The faculty member shall notify the student in writing whenever such action is taken, and the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct shall receive a copy of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report indicating final disposition of the case, which will be placed in the student's judicial file. In all matters where the charge of academic misconduct is disputed by the student or if the faculty member feels a sanction greater than an F in the course is appropriate (such as repeated offenses or flagrant violations), the faculty member shall refer the matter to the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct, making use of the Academic Misconduct Incident Report. Additional sanctions greater than an F in a course can be levied only through the system of due process established and overseen by the Office of Community Standards and Student Conduct or through the university's research misconduct procedures noted below. Suspension or dismissal from the university for academic misconduct will result in a notation of that action on the transcript of a graduate-level student.

The university has adopted additional policies and procedures for dealing with research misconduct among its students, faculty and staff. The guidelines, entitled Research Integrity at Northern Illinois University, are available in department offices, in the [office of the dean of the Graduate School](#), and [online](#), and pertain to the intentional commission of any of the following acts: falsification of data, improper assignment of authorship, claiming another person's work as one's own, unprofessional manipulation of experiments or of research procedures, and misappropriation of research funds.

If a graduate student fails to maintain the standards of academic or professional integrity expected in their discipline or program, the student's admission to the program may be terminated on recommendation of the student's major department. A statement on students' rights to the products of research is available in department offices, in [office of the dean of the Graduate School](#), and [online](#) (NIU graduate catalog, 2016-2017).

GRADING SYSTEM

The [Graduate School](#) grading system applies to all graduate students taking courses for graduate credit. The graduate GPA is computed by dividing the total number of grade points earned by the total number of credit hours that a student has taken in NIU courses earning grade points. In no

case are NIU courses taken for undergraduate or law credit or transfer courses included in the computation of the graduate GPA. Grades and their grade point values are as follows.

<i>Grades Earning Graduate Credit</i>	<i>Level of Performance</i>	<i>Grade Points Per Semester Hour</i>
A	Superior	4.00
A-		3.67
B+	Satisfactory	3.33
B		3.00
B-	Marginal	2.67
C+		2.33
C		2.00
S	Satisfactory for courses graded S/U	-

<i>Grades Not Earning Graduate Credit</i>	<i>Level of Performance</i>	<i>Grade Points Per Semester Hour</i>
C-	Deficient	1.67
D		1.00
F	Seriously deficient	0.00
U	Unsatisfactory for courses graded S/U	0.00

Other transcript entries, with their definition, include the following.

I-Incomplete (see also following section on "Incompletes")

IP-In Progress

WP-Passing at time of withdrawal

WF-Failing at time of withdrawal

O-Audit; no grade and no credit

Students doing less than satisfactory work will be assigned the grade of C-, D, F or U. Graduate credit is given only for those courses in which a grade of S, or C or better, is earned. A grade of S indicates that the student has performed at a level equivalent to at least a B.

S/U and IP grading

Certain graduate courses are graded on an S/U basis; such grading, however, is restricted to courses titled externship, independent study/research, institute, internship, practicum, seminar or workshop. Individual students may not elect S and U grading. Other graduate courses are graded on an S/U/IP (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory/In Progress) basis. Thesis and dissertation courses, as well as similar project courses that require completion of work over multiple semesters and that are designated as 699 or 799, are graded on an S/U/IP basis. IP is a neutral grade — that is, the grade does not carry quality points — but IP grades awarded for 699 and 799 count toward the

completion of a degree. While a student is working on the thesis, dissertation or continuing project, a grade of U or IP will be awarded. In the final semester in which the thesis, dissertation or project is successfully completed, a grade of S will be awarded. Grades of IP previously awarded will remain on the transcript, except in the case of on-going internships or similar courses, as designated in the catalog. In those cases, IP grades must be changed to an appropriate letter grade by the instructor in order for the course to count toward degree. No student may graduate with a U on their transcript in such courses.

Incompletes

When a student is passing a course yet special circumstances prevent a student's completing the requirements of a course, the instructor may, at their discretion, direct that the symbol I (indicating incomplete) be entered in the student's record. When the *I* is assigned, the instructor will file in the departmental office and in the Graduate School an Incomplete/Reversion Grade Form outlining the work to be completed, the deadline for completion of the work and the grade that will be awarded if the student fails meet the deadline. In no case may the deadline be later than 120 days after the last day of final examinations during the term for which the incomplete is assigned. The incomplete must be removed within 120 days.

If the instructor does not change the incomplete within the period allowed for resolution, the incomplete (I) will be converted to an F or to the stipulated reversion grade. If no reversion grade is recorded, a grade of F will be awarded at the conclusion of 120 days. An administratively awarded grade, like one assigned by an instructor, may be changed at the discretion of the instructor of record prior to a student's graduation. A student may not graduate with a transcript entry of I on their record.

Grade appeals

A graduate-level student may formally appeal a course grade alleged to have been assigned capriciously. The definition of capricious grading is limited to; a) The assignment of a grade to a particular student on some basis other than performance in the course, b) The assignment of a grade to a particular student by more exacting or demanding standards than were applied to other students in that course, or c) The assignment of a grade by a substantial departure from the instructor's standards announced during the first fourth of the course. A grade appeal may not be based upon disagreement with the judgment of an instructor in assessing the quality of a student's work. The student must submit a formal written appeal to the departmental grade review board, through the chair of the department offering the course, by the end of the fourth week of the fall or spring semester immediately following the term for which the course grade was assigned. A full description of procedures governing the appeal of allegedly capricious semester grades for graduate-level students may be obtained from the ombudsperson, department offices, college offices and the [office of the dean of the Graduate School](#), and [online](#). Appeal procedures should be consulted before appealing a grade (NIU graduate catalog, 2016-2017).

RETENTION, REMEDIATION AND DISMISSAL

RETENTION POLICY

The faculty in the counseling program is confident that each student admitted has the potential to be successful in graduate study and professional practice. Success in coursework, clinical practice, candidacy exams, and the demonstration of the core dispositions are examples of continuation standards within the program. Such successes facilitate students' progress toward completing a

degree in the counseling program. However, admission into the counseling program does not guarantee degree completion. Faculty expect students to fully engage in all aspects of the learning environment, showing openness to new experiences and appropriate risk taking necessary to develop as a person and professional counselor. The student's faculty advisor plays an integral role in giving feedback to a student, thus providing opportunities for continued growth and development. Personal counseling services are available at NIU's [Counseling and Consultation Services](#) as well as in the community. Students are encouraged to take advantage of personal counseling when requested by program faculty.

Counseling faculty members have a professional responsibility to serve as gatekeepers for the counseling profession (ACA, 2014, Section F.6) to protect the public welfare. Gatekeeping is defined as, "the initial and ongoing academic, skill, and dispositional assessment of students' competency for professional practice, including remediation and termination as appropriate" (ACA, 2014, p. 20).

Faculty systematically discuss and evaluate students' dispositional progress in the program (see Appendix A). When impediments are identified, the student will be informed verbally and in writing.

If others (i.e., faculty, site supervisors) have made similar observations, the program coordinator, advisor, and/or other faculty will initiate a meeting with the student to discuss the apparent impediment to progress toward professional competence. Remedies and expected behavior changes will be discussed and outlined in a Remediation Plan.

REMEDIATION

If significant areas of growth are identified by faculty, students will be given specific feedback on the nature of the observed behavior as well as steps to remove barrier(s) to satisfactory progress toward professional competency. In many instances, a remediation plan (RP) will be crafted to provide clear and specific ways the student can improve and continue to progress in the program. However, in rare cases (e.g., student poses a potential harm to self or others), faculty may vote to remove the student from the program without an RP. In such cases, faculty will meet to discuss the student's failure to meet continuation standards (i.e., retention requirements) and determine whether the student should remain in the program.

The RP represents a formal agreement between the program and a student who is under remediation. Upon receipt of the RP, the student will review the plan and provide their signature indicating an understanding of the requirements expected and has agreed to meet those requirements. A student who chooses not to sign the RP should understand this will initiate a faculty meeting to discuss the student's failure to meet continuation standards, and a vote for dismissal will be entertained, guided by Graduate School policy. A remediation plan can be enforced without a student's signature, though collaboration in meeting retention requirements is the desired goal of the faculty. The CAHE department chair will inform the student of the appeals process if faculty vote to dismiss.

DISMISSAL POLICY

Dismissal of a master's student can be initiated for a variety of circumstances including, but not limited to, the following:

- When students violate the criteria established by the NIU Graduate School for [satisfactory academic standing](#) (See Withdraw or Dismissal in the graduate catalog).
- Failure to meet continuation standards related to academic and clinical competency
- When a student earns below a B grade in any course on the students program of study. The Department of Counseling follows the [Appeal Process detailed in the Appeals and Dismissals section of the NIU Graduate Catalog](#).

Due to the nature of the program, students can be dismissed for professional competence or dispositional concerns (i.e., unrelated to success with course assignments and grades). The American Counseling Association Code of Ethics (2014) requires counselor educators provide remediation and/or dismissal from counseling programs when “they become aware of limitations that might impede performance” or when students are unable to demonstrate “they can provide competent counseling services to a range of diverse clients (6.f.b.).” As stated above, gatekeeping is an ethical mandate for counselor educators and designed to protect counselors in training and their current and future clients. Professional competence concerns that could lead to dismissal include, but are not limited to, impairment, academic dishonesty, ethical violations, lack of professional comportment, personal attitudes or value systems that conflict with effective counseling relationships.

In all cases of dismissal, the student will be notified in writing.

In addition to the ACA Code of Ethics, the department of counseling adheres to NIU policies with regard to [student conduct](#), [academic integrity](#) and [ethical compliance](#).

Student disposition dismissal

Counseling faculty members have a professional, ethical responsibility to serve as gatekeepers for the counseling profession (ACA, 2014, Section F.6.b.). Counseling is a discipline that requires protection of the public welfare of our communities. Gatekeeping refers to the responsibility of all counselors, counselor educators, and student counselors, to intervene with counselor trainees, supervisees, professional colleagues and supervisors who engage in behavior that could threaten the welfare of those receiving counseling services. The American Counseling Association’s Code of Ethics (2014) specifically states that counselors must act to rectify the problematic condition through appropriate organizational and professional channels (ACA, 2014, Section F.5.).

Faculty, site supervisors, and doctoral students systematically discuss and evaluate students’ progress in the program. When deficiencies or impediments are identified, the student will be informed verbally and, potentially, in writing. The NIU counseling program’s disposition statement is used as a framework for evaluating student dispositions (Appendix B).

Student dismissal for academic dishonesty

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating and plagiarism. For the complete academic integrity statement, please refer to the current NIU graduate catalog on the [Graduate School website](#), Student Resources menu.

DISMISSAL PROCESS

The student evaluation process is continuous from the start of the program through graduation.

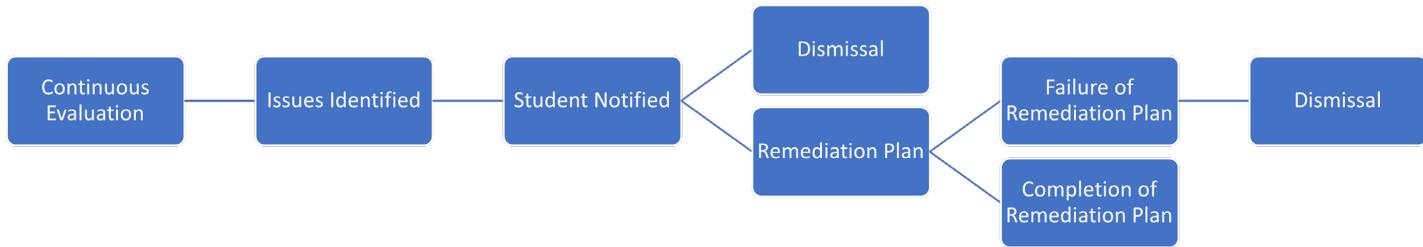


Figure 1. Evaluation, Remediation, and Dismissal Process

TIME LIMITATION

All master's students must complete their program within **six consecutive** years of starting their first semester as a student. If all courses are not completed within this timeframe, students may have to retake courses for credit or demonstrate current knowledge of the subject matter as requested by the professor. If these steps are not taken, any outdated coursework must be deleted from the student's file and other coursework must be substituted in the program of courses. Transfer courses falling outside the limitation of time cannot be used in a graduate program. If students have paused their coursework for more than one consecutive semester (fall or spring) they will need to re-apply for admission.

DISABILITY STATEMENT (ADA COMPLIANCE)

NIU will take reasonable steps to ensure that all qualified employees and applicants are treated fairly and equitably, regardless of any physical or mental impairment. The university reserves the right to request verification of an individual's disability. The university will make a reasonable accommodation to all qualified individuals to allow them to perform the essential functions as a student.

DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) at NIU has been created to see that individuals who request services are provided appropriate accommodations in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act. DRC provides direct support services to students with disabilities and serves as a resource to other offices in the university, which enables them to meet the needs of persons with disabilities more effectively. DRC advocates accessible opportunities by providing a wide range of support services tailored to the individual student including admissions arrangements, auxiliary aids (interpreters, note-takers, readers, etc.),

books in alternative formats, advising/counseling, adapted equipment/computers, special residence hall arrangements, etc. For more information, please visit the [DRC website](#).

TRANSFER CREDIT

With the approval of the student's department and the office of the dean of the [Graduate School](#), some graduate courses taken at other accredited (U.S.) or recognized (foreign) institutions may be accepted toward meeting the credit-hour requirements of a graduate degree at NIU. The student must have earned graduate credit in the course according to the institution at which the course was taken (so, for example, courses in which undergraduate credit, medical school credit or other professional post-baccalaureate credit was earned cannot be accepted in transfer).

No transfer credit accepted from another institution may be in correspondence courses. Typically, correspondence courses are noted as such on a transcript. They are defined as courses in which interaction between the instructor and the student is neither regular nor substantive and in which interaction is primarily initiated by the student. Most often, correspondence courses are self-paced.

A grade of B- or better must have been earned in each graduate course accepted in transfer toward meeting NIU graduate degree requirements, and the overall GPA in all graduate transfer courses thus accepted must be 3.0 or higher. Courses for which grades of S, Pass, Credit or the like have been earned will be accepted in transfer only if the Graduate School can officially verify that the student's performance was at a level equivalent to a grade of B or better.

To receive consideration for graduate work done elsewhere, the student must submit to the Graduate School an official transcript showing the coursework in question. Transfer credit is considered to be accepted toward meeting degree requirements only at the time a student is cleared to graduate from the program.

In transfer, three quarter hours are considered to be equivalent to two semester hours. Therefore, if the graduate credit earned in a course accepted in transfer from another institution was reported in quarter hours, the transfer credit will be granted at the ratio of two semester hours per three quarter hours.

Students should consult the "Requirements for Graduate Degrees" section of the graduate catalog for more specific information on limitations on transfer credit and the combined total of transfer and other courses applicable to individual degree programs.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

[CAHE GA Interview Day](#) is a collaborative effort between the Division of Student Affairs and the Counseling and Higher Education (CAHE) department in the College of Education. This partnership provides students with hands-on, practical experiences to develop as Student Affairs practitioners. Participation in CAHE GA Interview Day provides students with an opportunity to learn about the benefits of becoming a graduate assistant within the Division of Student Affairs or one of the several partnering departments.

Students are strongly encouraged to seek out graduate assistantships available throughout campus. [NIU's Graduate School](#) provides information for positions outside of department. Students cannot hold a graduate assistantship and regular NIU employment, such as a Supportive Professional Staff position, concurrently.

Finding a graduate assistantship requires time and planning. Most offices interview for graduate assistant positions in the spring semester to fill fall semester positions.

The number of graduate assistantships for counseling students within the CAHE department is extremely limited. Additional places to inquire for open positions include Residence Life, Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, CHANCE program, Office of the Ombudsperson, Center for Black Studies, Latino Resource Center, Career Services, and the Disability Resource Center to name a few.

COUN 211 GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP

COUN 211: Career Planning, is a 3 credit hour undergraduate course occasionally taught by master's-level counseling students. Current MSED and PhD students are given an opportunity to build their teaching and presentation skills by instructing a COUN 211 section as a 10-hour per week Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA). Master's students who wish to have this opportunity must successfully complete COUN 511: Career Counseling prior to teaching COUN 211. Many students who teach 211 have no prior experience in teaching; therefore, training along with weekly meetings are in place to help new GTAs develop their teaching skills.

FINANCIAL AID

Financial aid is available in the form of graduate assistantships, scholarships, fellowships and certain grants. Graduate assistantships are limited, but first priority for assignment of departmental positions goes to doctoral students. Students are also responsible for all student fees and health insurance (if applicable).

Scholarships and fellowships

Eligible students may wish to consider applying for scholarships and fellowships as eligible. Visit the graduate school [funding](#) website for more information.

Students not admitted to the Graduate School are not eligible to receive graduate assistantships. Also, assistantships do not provide payment of students' fees. Students who hold assistantship appointments should be prepared to pay the full amount of fees in accordance with published university procedures.

Graduate assistantships and miscellaneous scholarships, fellowships, or funding opportunities are announced through the counseling program student email list.

ENDORSEMENT POLICY

PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR LICENSE

In order to be licensed as a school counselor in the public schools of the state of Illinois, a person must be of good character, in sound health, a citizen of the United States and at least 19 years of age. The Illinois licensure law also requires that an individual complete an approved preparation program at a recognized institution.

The university's licensure officer is responsible for reviewing the record of each graduate of an approved counselor education program and for recommending or withholding recommendation of that individual for certification by entitlement and endorsement. Licensure is not an automatic

procedure. In order to qualify for licensure, each student in an entitlement program must complete an application for licensure and provide evidence of having completed the general requirements; courses in professional education appropriate to the program being followed, including a minimum of 600 clock hours of approved school counseling experience.

The following licensure is available at the graduate level only and are approved by the Illinois State Board of Education: School Service Personnel – School Counselor.

Questions about these endorsement programs should be addressed to the appropriate department. Also, see the [educator licensure entitlement information](#).

LICENSED PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

A licensed professional counselor (LPC) in Illinois is provisionally licensed. That is, they must be practicing under the supervision of an independently licensed professional (e.g., LCPC, LCSW, Licensed Psychologist). In order to become an LPC in the state of Illinois, a person must be of good character. The Illinois licensure law also requires that an individual complete an approved preparation program at a recognized institution.

The university's licensure officer is responsible for reviewing the record of each graduate of an approved counselor education program and for recommending or withholding recommendation of that individual for certification by entitlement and endorsement. Licensure is not an automatic procedure. In order to qualify for licensure, each student in an entitlement program must complete an application for licensure and provide evidence of having completed the general requirements; courses in professional education appropriate to the program, including a minimum of 600 clock hours of approved clinical counseling experience. Passing the National Counselor Exam (NCE) is also required to receive the LPC in Illinois. For more information, please see the [Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation - LPC](#).

LICENSED CLINICAL PROFESSIONAL COUNSELOR

After two years of post-Master's, full-time clinical work under supervision, graduates of this program can become eligible for independent licensure in Illinois, becoming an LCPC. This requires another application to the state, verification of experience and supervision, and the passing of the National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Exam (NCMHCE). [See the IDFPR website for details.](#)

Letters of recommendation

In most cases, faculty in the counseling program are happy to write letters of recommendation for their students, but faculty and staff also have the right to refuse. Please see the individual faculty member regarding their specific policy. Before assuming a faculty member will write the letter, please secure their permission. Please give the faculty member adequate time to draft the letter, typically a minimum of two weeks. When asking for a letter of recommendation, please provide the following:

- The name or title of the position or award you are applying for.
- Required and preferred qualifications for the position/award.
- Contact information associated with the position/award.

- Your current résumé or curriculum vita.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

Students have numerous opportunities to engage in learning and professional development during their time in the counseling program. Some are listed here, though many more exist.

RESEARCH TEAMS

Faculty conduct research and scholarship, often in collaboration with students. If interested in developing your research skills, contact faculty members with whom you share clinical or research interests to see if they have an active research team or are looking for support on a project. Announcements about research opportunities will be shared via the counseling program email list.

COUNSELORS OF COLOR COMMUNITY CONNECTION

Students of color are able to join an informal mentoring circle facilitated by faculty of color in the counseling program. Information about meeting times and dates will be circulated at the beginning of the academic year via student email accounts.

COUNSELING ORGANIZATIONS AT NIU

All students are encouraged to join our student organizations to become actively involved in the counseling program community and on campus. Through these experiences, students develop as leaders, grow their personal and professional networks and contribute to the development of counselors and the counselor profession.

Northern Illinois University Counseling Association

The Northern Illinois University Counseling Association (NIUCA) is a chapter of the Illinois Counseling Association, which is a state branch of the American Counseling Association. NIUCA is a not-for-profit organization of counseling and human development professionals and students who are being prepared to practice in education, health care, residential, private practice, community/agency, government and business/industry settings. This organization is designed for all students in the master's and doctoral counseling programs at NIU. NIUCA also welcomes students-at-large and students from other helping-related programs on campus.

The mission of NIUCA is to enhance the professional growth and development of counseling students as well as those employed in human service professions. NIUCA seeks to increase a sense of community with the NIU counseling program.

The benefits of becoming a NIUCA member include:

1. Exposure to current information about trends and changes in the counseling profession.
2. Networking with other chapter members and faculty currently in the field.
3. Sharing with colleagues their ideas, knowledge and philosophies about counseling.
4. Participating in social and educational activities that promote interaction and friendship among participants.

Past events NIUCA has hosted include speakers on equine therapy, ACA conference preparation, practicum and supervision question and answer sessions, and play therapy presentations. Members have also participated in events such as Challenge Day through participating high schools in the area, and social outings such as bowling and tailgating. NIUCA is a great way for students to become a part of the NIU community and share with colleagues their ideas, knowledge, and philosophies about counseling. *Get connected with NIUCA!*

Chi Sigma Iota

Rho Alpha Kappa is NIUs' chapter of Chi Sigma Iota, the international honor society of professional counseling and for professional counselors.

The mission of Chi Sigma Iota is to promote scholarship, research, professionalism, leadership, advocacy and excellence in counseling, and to recognize high attainment in the pursuit of academic and clinical excellence in the profession of counseling.

All students, regardless of membership, can attend and participate in Rho Alpha Kappa events. Only members may serve on the board or be eligible for awards.

To be eligible for membership, a student must meet the following eligibility standards:

1. Completion of at least nine credit hours of graduate courses.
2. Maintaining an overall grade point average of 3.5 or better on a 4.0 scale.
3. Professional identity as a counselor.
4. Receive an invitation from Rho Alpha Kappa President and Chapter Faculty Advisor

Black Counselors Association

The Black Counselors Association (BCA) is an organization dedicated to academic, scholastic and social excellence and advancement of African-American graduate students at NIU. The BCA identifies its mission as an organization that provides support and forum for graduate students in the field of counseling. It is the mission of the Black Counselors Association to promote social justice, multicultural competency and professional networks for African-American as well as other students of color.

We provide opportunities for counseling students to participate in community outreach, mentoring, professional development programs, as well as our annual spring social.

Email: blackcounselors.niu@gmail.com

[NIU Black Counselors Association Huskie Link website](#)

NIU Association for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues in Counseling

NIUALGBTIC is comprised of students and professionals in the counseling field. As we seek officially recognized organization status, the vision and mission of the organization is to educate the public and empower people who identify as LGBTQ+ at intersections of their identities.

NATIONAL AND STATE COUNSELING ORGANIZATIONS

The following professional counseling organizations offer opportunities that are valuable at any stage in your counselor development. Membership is available to both students and professionals.

AMERICAN COUNSELING ASSOCIATION (ACA)

The American Counseling Association is a not-for-profit, professional and educational organization that is dedicated to the growth and enhancement of the counseling profession. Founded in 1952, ACA is the world's largest association exclusively representing professional counselors in various practice settings.

By providing leadership training, publications, continuing education opportunities and advocacy services to nearly 45,000 members, ACA helps counseling professionals develop their skills and expand their knowledge base.

ACA has been instrumental in setting professional and ethical standards for the counseling profession. The association has made considerable strides in accreditation, licensure and national certification. It also represents the interests of the profession before congress and federal agencies, and strives to promote recognition of professional counselors to the public and the media.

There are several [ACA divisions and branches](#) including the [Illinois Counseling Association](#), which is the state chapter of the ACA.

FINAL COMMENTS

We encourage you to refer back to this handbook as you make your way through the program. Remember that your advisor is designated to help through the process of obtaining your degree. It is important that you contact them throughout your coursework with the various questions and concerns you may have. Again, congratulations on this important first step to becoming a professional counselor.

APPENDIX A: STUDENT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RESPONSIBILITY FORM

Attestation to program policies and procedures

I understand that I am responsible for the information presented in the Master's in Counseling Program Handbook.

I have reviewed these materials carefully and accept this responsibility.

If I have questions concerning these materials, I will ask for clarification from a faculty member, my program advisor, the program coordinator, or CAHE Department Chair.

I am aware that failure to adhere to the information in this handbook could keep me from graduating, or delay my graduation, from this program.

***I have read the Master's in Counseling Program Handbook and understand
that I am responsible for the information contained herein.***

Student Printed Name

Signature of Student

Date

Admission Coordinator

Date

*All students must acknowledge receipt of handbook in the
Counseling Program Blackboard Community*

APPENDIX B: COUNSELING STUDENT DISPOSITION ASSESSMENT

**Northern Illinois University
M.S.Ed. in Counseling**

Student disposition assessment

(Adapted from the University of North Carolina-Charlotte's Department of Counseling)

The counseling program at Northern Illinois University is responsible for preparing candidates who have the required knowledge, skills and *professional dispositions** to become effective clinical mental health and professional school counselors, as well as counseling advocates and consultants. Therefore, your chosen program of study will prepare you to develop and model the knowledge, skills and *dispositions* expected of successful professionals. The CES faculty will evaluate your demonstration of these *professional dispositions* and provide you with feedback about your progress. Professional dispositions include the attitudes, values and beliefs demonstrated through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors as educators interact with students, families, colleagues and communities. These positive behaviors support student learning and development. They include the ideal of *fairness* and the belief that all students can learn. The American Counseling Association's (2014) Code of Ethics articulates the necessary characteristics expected for all counselors- and counselor educators-in-training at Northern Illinois University.

*Dispositions are assessed indirectly, based on candidates' observable behavior in educational settings (NCATE, 2008).

1. This evaluation is to be used by any faculty member at any time during a candidate's program of study [and for yearly review].
2. The faculty member who initiates the assessment should schedule a conference with the student to discuss and document the concern.

The student demonstrates:

I. Impact

- A. Demonstrates awareness of own impact on others.
- B. Demonstrates ability to deal with conflict.
- C. Demonstrates flexibility regarding responding to changing demands in the professional and interpersonal environment.

II. Professional identity and continuous growth

- A. Demonstrates openness to new ideas.
- B. Demonstrates multicultural awareness and sensitivity.
- C. Accepts and uses feedback.
- D. Expresses feelings effectively and appropriately.
- E. Demonstrates professional appearance.
- F. Cooperates with others.

- G. Communicates effectively and appropriately.
- H. Shows initiative and motivation (e.g., meets deadlines, class attendance).

III. Ethics

- A. Accepts responsibility for personal actions and behaviors.
- B. Attends to ethical and legal responsibilities including the ACA Code of Ethics and the NIU's Student Code of Conduct policy.
- C. Discloses any unethical or unlawful activity from the time application was submitted into the program until the end of the program.
- D. Demonstrates honesty, integrity, fairness, confidentiality and respect for others.

APPENDIX C: CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK PROTOCOL

NIU Graduate Counseling Program – Current Students

All applicants who are recommended by faculty for admission into practicum must successfully pass a criminal background check before being allowed to see clients. The process consists of the following steps:

- If an applicant has already completed and passed a criminal background check through Northern Illinois University, notify the practicum office at cahc_cetc@niu.edu to have this confirmed.
 - If an applicant has already completed and passed a criminal background check through Northern Illinois University through other means (GA or other employment) or other school/agency requiring your CBC for appointment or employment you must have your hiring supervisor send a letter on their company letterhead indicating that in order to have been hired/appointed to your current position you completed and passed a criminal background check. Have the supervisor include the date it was passed and their signature. This letter should be mailed to: CAHE Department Chair, 200 Gabel Hall, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115.
 - All other applicants must complete the NIU volunteer packet, including confirmation of completing mandated reporter training and CBC authorization.
 - Forms are available in the Community Counseling Training Center in Graham 416.
 - These forms are original documents and must not be copied for duplicate submission. If you make a mistake on a form use the means listed above to acquire a new form.
 - Always keep a copy for your own records.
 - A search will also be undertaken through the Illinois Sex Offender Registry (SOR) and The Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website (NSOPW) through the U.S. Department of Justice. Convictions from any of the sources may prevent admission into the NIU Counseling Program and/or advancement into practicum.
 - Results of the criminal background check must be received by the department chair before seeing your first client. Results of the fingerprint check generally takes three to six weeks to obtain. During that period, the student is not permitted to participate in field experiences in the schools.
 - An applicant may not be placed in any schools if the background check determines that they have been convicted of criminal behavior that, by law, automatically prohibits them from attaining professional educator licensure in Illinois.
 - The offenses that have automatically prohibited licensure include first degree murder, any Class X felony, juvenile pimping, soliciting a juvenile prostitute, exploitation of a child, obscenity, child pornography, criminal sexual assault, aggravated criminal sexual assault, criminal sexual abuse, aggravated criminal sexual abuse, some offenses set forth in the Cannabis Control Act and some crimes defined in the Illinois Controlled Substances Act.
 - Students applying for practicum whose criminal background check reveals an offense other than these may be recommended for approval if, in the judgment of the program faculty, the offense should not disqualify the individual from obtaining a counseling degree.
- Students are advised that their admission into the counseling program, approval for counseling practicum, and advancement to internship does not guarantee professional

licensure or certification post-degree. These students must follow the additional admission process indicated below.

- Please note that criminal background checks are also conducted as part of the Illinois counseling licensure process. This is a separate evaluation process from NIU's counseling program and may end in different results. Students who are concerned that their backgrounds may prohibit them from obtaining counseling licensure may contact the [Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation](#) for an evaluation prior to applying for practicum.
- Practicum students are responsible for all fees connected with this procedure. They may retrieve background check forms from the Community Counseling Training Center in Graham 416. Students should indicate the current CAHE department chair as the requester/receiver of background check results. The results of this background check are kept confidential from the counseling faculty. If a positive response is found from the background check, this information is shared with the chair of the Counseling and Higher Education Department and shared with the student.

Follow-up on the results:

- If the student wishes to continue with the program, they must send a letter to the department chair indicating that; 1) They are aware that the results of the background check will be shared with the counseling faculty, 2) They wish to still be considered for program completion. This letter can also include any additional information that may be helpful to the faculty in making program decisions.
- If the student wishes, they can arrange to meet with a three-person committee of faculty members in addition to submitting a letter to the counseling faculty who will be convened to evaluate the student's request. If program continuation is denied by the three-person committee, the practicum applicant may appeal to the entire counseling faculty. At this point, the entire counseling faculty will evaluate the student and a final decision will be rendered.

For any additional questions about the process, contact the CCTC office at cahc_cctc@niu.edu or 815-753-9312. Please note, the center director does not have access to any of the criminal background records. All records are reviewed by the CAHE department chair.