

News Release

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Three TTUHSC School of Health Professions Programs Receive 8-Year Accreditation

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP) on March 1 announced three Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center (TTUHSC) School of Health Professions programs — the Master of Science in Addiction Counseling (MSAC), the Master of Science in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling (MSCR) and the Master of Science in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (MSMH) — have been granted full accreditation for eight years, the maximum period allowed.

CACREP's evaluation of the programs, which included a site visit, was conducted last year. The accreditation decision was made during CACREP's January board meeting.

"This is an impressive feat, especially considering this is the first attempt at accreditation for all three programs," TTUHSC School of Health Professions Dean Dawndra Sechrist, OTR, Ph.D., said. "What this means for our programs is a validation for the new and innovative way we have designed the programs and department where three-quarters of course work is shared by all programs and there is collaboration between programs on content development and delivery. This all will benefit the programs, departments, the School of Health Professions and TTUHSC so that hopefully we'll see a rise in ranking of the programs."

Sechrist said accreditation opens up many possibilities for TTUHSC programs and students. For instance, students who graduate from accredited programs have more employment opportunities because some agencies require employees to have graduated from CACREP accredited programs. Graduating from an accredited program also can assist students seeking licensure or certification because some states will only accept a diploma from an accredited program as proof of content area education and training. It can be helpful with qualifying for professional exams.

If there are standards or conditions that are not met during the accrediting or re-accrediting process, Sechrist said programs may have to go up for re-accreditation after two years to show they have met those standards and conditions. If programs are given full accreditation with no conditions, as is the case with TTUHSC's three programs, they must undergo re-accreditation every eight years.

"For our programs, accreditation serves as evidence that we are meeting the highest standards in preparing our students for employment in the counseling fields," Sechrist added.

Evans H. Spears, Ph.D., CRC, an associate professor and chair of the Department of Clinical Counseling and Mental Health (CCMH), said it is important to note that the accreditation has been a

team effort on behalf of all the faculty, staff, department program directors and administrators from the School of Health Professions, TTUHSC and the Texas Tech University System.

“President Rice-Spearman and Chancellor Mitchell provided immense support in the creation of the department and programs in their previous positions, and the new administration of SHP have continued to provide support and encouragement throughout the process,” Spears said. “For all three programs to be recommended for full accreditation for the full eight years with no requirements speaks volumes to the support we received throughout the department, the school and the university administration.”

TTUHSC’s MSAC program was designed to simultaneously train practitioners in evidence-based counseling skills and distance service provision techniques like telehealth. This new CACREP accredited addiction counseling program will help increase the number of behavioral health professionals across Texas.

The MSCR program at TTUHSC is designed to provide comprehensive training for the clinical rehabilitation counseling field by placing a strong emphasis on telehealth, a model of distance-based service provision and a cutting-edge technique growing in practice and acceptance within the counseling field. With the MSCR being CACREP accredited, it opens doors for students to be eligible for multiple national certifications and licensure in the majority of states across the country.

TTUHSC’s MSMH program is one of the first counselor education programs in the country to simultaneously train practitioners in clinical counseling skills and telehealth techniques. The MSMH program was designed to prepare mental health practitioners to work competently and ethically through the mastery of evidence-based counseling practice to meet the unique needs of diverse communities, especially in rural settings. CACREP accreditation will allow graduates licensure eligibility across a majority of states, which will help to reduce the national shortage of qualified mental health counselors.

All three programs within the CCMH Department are 100% online and serve students from across the country.

CACREP’s mission is to promote the professional competence of counseling and related practitioners through the development of preparation standards, the encouragement of excellence in program development and the accreditation of professional preparation programs.