



2023-2024

MS Marriage and Family Therapy Program  
Stakeholder Report

Department of Counseling and Family Therapy

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# CAPELLA

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## Contents

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INTRODUCTION.....	1
MS MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPY PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT.....	1
KEY PROGRAM CHANGES IN 2023–2024.....	1
PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FROM JULY 2023 TO JUNE 2024.....	2
PROGRAM STUDENTS AND FACULTY .....	3
PROFESSIONAL STAFF .....	5
SUMMARY OF STAFF CHANGES .....	6
INNOVATIVE PROCESSES SUPPORTING THE MFT PROGRAM.....	6
MFT PROGRAM ASSESSMENT SYSTEM .....	6
FACULTY ADVISING FORUM .....	6
HONOR SOCIETY .....	7
LEARNER ADVOCACY AND EMPOWERMENT GROUP .....	7
ADVISORY COUNCIL.....	7
ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND PROFESSIONAL FITNESS COMMITTEES .....	7

## Introduction

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This report contains highlights of recent activities, changes, and initiatives that affect the Commission on Accreditation for Marriage and Family Therapy Education (COAMFTE)-accredited MS Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) program. The program continues to focus on academic excellence through curriculum design, residency experiences, internship component, and learner advising. A comprehensive assessment process guides program improvement at the course, program, and school levels.

## MS Marriage and Family Therapy Program Mission Statement

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The Marriage and Family Therapy program's mission is to prepare master's level clinicians to work effectively with diverse clients across various therapeutic settings and situations as couple and family therapists. Learners receive academic preparation and systemic clinical training designed to prepare them for work with sensitivity to the complex mental health needs of individuals and families within a multicultural society. The program curriculum, aligned with the COAMFTE standards, supports the high standards and rigor of professional practice based upon established ethical standards for therapists.

## Key Program Changes in 2023–2024

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Beginning April 2023, the program successfully transitioned and onboarded a new program leadership team, including the program director (PD), assistant program director (APD), and assistant faculty director (AFD). Additionally, due to faculty retirements and increased enrollment, three new full-time faculty members were hired in 2023.

The MFT program implemented the following changes to support alignment with COAMFTE's Key Element IV-D:

- The program employed a new course review process to improve inclusivity, currency, and alignment of competencies to outcomes.
- The program established a committee composed of program faculty to address learner progress. The committee uses academic learner review (ALR) report forms to track learner progress and identify learners who:
  - are struggling to obtain a placement site for site-based learning;
  - are reaching max time in the program;
  - have multiple quarters of inactivity;
  - have lower grade point averages; or
  - have expressed other concerns to their faculty advisor that may impede their progression through the program.

Once at-risk learners are identified, the committee will provide targeted outreach to support the learners.

- To gain more feedback from learners, program leadership has invited student group representatives to meet with them quarterly to share learners' perspectives. The PD and APD have also organized two "coffee breaks" for learners in the form of Zoom meetings that any learner enrolled in the program can join. The coffee breaks serve as a platform for learners to share their experiences, provide feedback on the program, or pose questions to the leadership.
- To better communicate programmatic changes or updates with learners, the PD and APD create program update videos biannually in Q1 and Q3. The videos inform learners about modifications in the program, respond to prevalent learner feedback or concerns, and offer a glimpse into future programmatic objectives and initiatives.

## Program Highlights from July 2023 to June 2024

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**Faculty Career Pathway.** Capella University launched the Faculty Career Pathway program for its full-time, core faculty in late 2023. The primary objective of this program is to establish a well-defined and organized pathway for the career advancement of its esteemed faculty members within the university and thereby recognize and reward their dedication, expertise, and contributions. This pathway empowers faculty to drive their own progression through the academic ranks of assistant, associate, and full professor.

Full-time, core faculty are evaluated on the faculty career pathways rubric on an annual basis. Upon meeting eligibility for promotion, they are encouraged to connect with their program director about next steps to apply. In the latter half of 2023, program directors created faculty career pathway rubrics for the first time and core faculty were awarded the academic rank of assistant professor and associate professor. As of 2024, all new full-time, core faculty are hired at the assistant professor level. Promotions of select faculty with the academic rank of associate professor to full professors are expected at the end of 2024.

In the MFT program, 12 of 26 full-time, core faculty were promoted from assistant professor to associate professor. The first round of applications for promotion from the rank of associate professor to full professor will begin in Q3-2024. MFT faculty with the academic rank of assistant, associate, or full professor must meet COAMFTE standards to be core faculty.

**Educational technology.** The program implemented two educational technology platforms within the Canvas courseroom in five of the core courses. Engageli is a video-based learning platform that enables enhanced interaction using recorded and synchronous video, and Yellowdig is a social-media style discussion platform with grading tools and daily bonuses for engagement. These platforms are designed to facilitate learner engagement and promote synchronous opportunities between learners and faculty.

**Faculty development.** The program organized two trainings for all faculty (one in August 2023 and one in February 2024). The professional development days included trainings on teaching

style; inclusivity; and incorporating technology tools and metrics into teaching. The program is currently engaged in the COAMFTE reaccreditation process.

## Program Students and Faculty

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The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences and associated clinical programs, including Marriage and Family Therapy, are committed to advancing the university's mission and is committed to inclusivity. Program administration and faculty are dedicated to training culturally competent therapists who are prepared to address the complex issues facing individuals, couples, families, social, community and political systems in a diverse and changing world.

The data below provide a snapshot of the MS Marriage and Family Therapy program student population.

### Students

Race/Ethnicity	MFT Students
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%
Asian	2.3%
Black or African American	25.4%
Hispanic of any race	13.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.3%
Nonresident	0.5%
Race Unspecified	2.8%
Two or more races	4.8%
White	50.2%

\*Column reflects the percentage of the total number of learners active in the program between July 2023 and June 2024 that self-identified as each ethnicity.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>MFT Learners*</b>
Female	87.6%
Male	12.2%
Prefer not to answer	0.2%

\*Column reflects the percentage of the total number of learners active in the program between July 2023 and June 2024 that self-identified as each gender.

### Faculty

<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>MFT Faculty*</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.8%
Asian	0.8%
Black or African American	7.9%
Hispanic of any race	3.9%
Race Unspecified	3.8%
Two or More Races	2.1%
Unknown	43.9%
White	36.8%

\*Column reflects the percentage of the total number of core and non-core faculty in the program between July 2023 and June 2024 that self-identified as each ethnicity.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>MFT Faculty*</b>
Female	24.1%
Male	23.9%
Prefers not to answer	52.0%

\*Column reflects the percentage of the total number of core and non-core faculty in the program between July 2023 and June 2024 that self-identified as each gender.

## Site Supervisors

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>MFT Total*</b>
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.4%
Asian	2.0%
Black or African American	16.0%
Decline to provide this information	4.2%
Hispanic of any race	7.7%
Two or more races	5.0%
White	64.7%

\*Column reflects the percentage of the total number of Site Supervisors in the program between July 2023 and June 2024 that self-identified as each ethnicity.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>MFT Total*</b>
Female	79.5%
Male	17.0%
Non-binary/gender fluid	0.8%
Prefer not to answer	2.7%

\*Column reflects the percentage of the total number of Site Supervisors in the program between July 2023 and June 2024 that self-identified as each gender.

## Professional Staff

The MS in Marriage and Family Therapy program is housed within the Department of Counseling and Family Therapy in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. This organization supports the program to provide a positive learner experience and the achievement of the Marriage and Family Therapy program's mission, goals, and outcomes. School and program leadership is as follows:

- **Jody Neuman-Aamlie, PhD, LP** – Interim Dean, School of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Associate Dean, Department of Counseling and Family Therapy
- **Kelly Heenan, PhD, LMFT, LPC, AAMFT Approved Supervisor** – Program Director, MS in Marriage and Family Therapy and PhD in Advanced Studies in Human Behavior programs



- **Natalie Richardson, PhD, LMFT, AAMFT Approved Supervisor** – Assistant Program Director, MS in Marriage and Family Therapy and PhD in Advanced Studies in Human Behavior programs
- **Tequilla Hill, PhD, LMFT-S, LMFT, AAMFT Approved Supervisor** – Assistant Faculty Director, MS in Marriage and Family Therapy program

### Summary of Staff Changes

Between June 2023 and July 2024, the program hired three new full-time faculty members and nine part-time/adjunct faculty members. In January 2024, Dr. Tequilla Hill was promoted from adjunct/part-time faculty to assistant faculty director. In this role, Dr. Hill reports to Dr. Heenan and has oversight of the MFT-Human Behavior part-time and adjunct faculty.

## Innovative Processes Supporting the MFT Program

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### MFT Program Assessment System

The MFT program assessment system provides a framework for regular faculty-led review of curriculum, program procedures and policy, and learner development for the program. The assessment plan establishes the guidelines for the program assessment process. Within this comprehensive assessment plan, program faculty review data to identify the program's strengths and areas of opportunity and to assess the program's effectiveness in meeting its outcomes and professional standards.

### Faculty Advising Forum

Faculty Advising Forums (FAF) are designed to support and monitor the progress of learners throughout the program and to address specific Capella University and MFT programmatic procedures and expectations to enhance the overall success of learners.

The forums serve as a resource to assist learners with questions they may have regarding any MFT academic, residency, and internship requirements or issues. The forums are available to learners during their enrollment in the program and provide ongoing and consistent advising resources. Each FAF courseroom is structured by geographic region, which allows for the sharing of regionally specific information and resources and an opportunity for learners to build their professional network. A faculty advisor who is a full-time, core faculty member of the MFT program facilitates each FAF courseroom.

The academic learner review (ALR) is a series of conversations with a structured form between learners and their FAF faculty advisor conducted at key milestones throughout the program. The first ALR is during a learners' first quarter of enrollment. Additional reviews are conducted prior to learners attending residency and a final ALR when learners should be enrolled in site-based learning at the end of their program. As part of the ALR, faculty review learner progress and development as measured by learning outcomes and professional disposition assessments and create plans for strengthening future performance and professional identity development.

## **Honor Society**

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The Pi chapter of Delta Kappa International Marriage and Family Therapy Academic Honor Society inducts eligible new members each quarter by invitation only. An executive board composed of seven Capella learners leads the chapter, and two faculty advisors provide guidance. The chapter engages in philanthropic activities, awards scholarships to current learners in the MFT program, and sponsors professionally oriented webinars for learners and graduates.

## **Learner Advocacy and Empowerment Group**

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A student group facilitated by three faculty advisors was established in 2022 to support all learners. The Learner Advocacy and Empowerment Group focuses on advocacy, empowerment, and inclusivity. The group meets monthly for discussion and to provide feedback to the faculty advisors for program improvement. The faculty advisors share the feedback with program leadership in quarterly meetings. Changes made as a result are communicated to the learner group advisors and representatives.

## **Advisory Council**

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The Marriage and Family Therapy Advisory Council comprises of key stakeholders including faculty, practitioners/site supervisors, and graduates. The council meets bi-annually to review program and accreditation updates and explore topics relevant to the enhancement and further development of the programs.

## **Academic Standards and Professional Fitness Committees**

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The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Professional Standards Committee and Academic Honesty Faculty Review Panel continue to support an assessment-based review of learner needs, strengths, and academic/professional requirements. The Professional Standards Committee is composed of faculty members from the school representing each program.