



## **Frequently Asked Questions about the CSUDH School and College Counseling program:**

### About the Program ~

#### **1) Q: What degrees or credentials are offered in the CSUDH Counseling program?**

A: We offer a Master of Science in Counseling degree with two options to choose from: School Counseling or College Counseling. Our program also offers the Pupil Personnel Services (PPS) credential in School Counseling, with the ability to pursue the authorization in Child Welfare and Attendance (CWA). We also offer a Certificate in College Counseling, which is available to M.S. in Counseling *School Counseling option* and PPS credential students.

- The M.S. in Counseling, *College Counseling option* will prepare you to work as a College Counselor in higher education within community college and university settings.
- The M.S. in Counseling, *School Counseling option* will prepare you to work as a School Counselor in pK-12 settings. To be employed as a public school counselor in the state of CA, you must possess a PPS credential.
- The PPS credential is required by the state of California to work as a School Counselor in the public school system. The PPS credential is not required for college counseling employment.
- The CWA is an optional specialization that is added as an authorization to a completed PPS credential. The CWA authorization will provide additional employment opportunities as a school counselor to work specifically with attendance improvement and truancy prevention.
- The Certificate in College Counseling provides School Counseling students a dual-specialization in both School and College Counseling. The Certificate is an additional nine units beyond the M.S. in Counseling, School Counseling degree requirements.

#### **2) Q: Do you have any upcoming Information Sessions?**

A: We always offer a detailed and up-to-date online information session on our website:

<http://www.csudh.edu/coe/programs/grad-ed/school-counseling>

The information in this online session is kept current and is very thorough. Likewise, it covers the exact same information and is actually *more* thorough than when we are able to offer on campus sessions, due to time limitations. Whenever on campus sessions are planned, they will be listed on our website, however, we have found that the information provided online tends to answer almost all questions prospective students have. If after reviewing our posted information you find that you still have unanswered questions, please contact the Division of Graduate Education (GED) office and we will do our best to assist.



**3) Q: When and in what format are your classes offered? Do you have online courses?**

A: Our classes are offered Monday through Thursday afternoon and evenings at both 4pm and 7pm time periods. Each course is 3 units and meets once during the week on campus for a 3 hour period. For example, a course scheduled for Monday at 4pm would meet once a week each Monday from 4:00 - 6:45pm.

Please note that everyone must take *both* 4pm and 7pm classes throughout the program, therefore work schedules must be planned accordingly. Our program is a traditional face-to-face format in order to engage in the experiential learning we believe is critical for counselor preparation.

**4) Q: What is the timeline for completion of your program?**

A: It typically takes full-time students 2 years to earn their M.S. degree, with the PPS credential taking an additional semester. Most students take 12 units for 4 consecutive Fall and Spring semesters, but it is also completely acceptable to finish the M.S. program at a slower pace by taking between 6-9 units each semester.

Students who choose to dual-specialize by pursuing both School and College counseling specializations would typically complete a combined degree / credential / certificate program in approximately 3 years attending full time.

With the exception of fieldwork courses, we do not permit students to take more than 12 units a semester. Students who enter the program with prior graduate coursework may have transferrable coursework, which may allow for earlier program completion. If you are in this situation it is recommended that you consult with a faculty advisor to determine the best program plan for you.

**5) Q: Do I have to choose between School or College options, can I earn both?**

A: Due to the University graduate degree requirements, you have to choose one option: School Counseling or College Counseling. Applicants should choose according to which option interests them most and which educational setting they eventually hope to work in. After admittance, it is possible to change your option to the other focus should you later decide to switch.

While one degree option must be selected, the program is designed to allow students in either option to gain specialization in the other area. The PPS credential in School Counseling is open to *all* M.S. in Counseling program students who have passed the CA Basic Skills Requirement (e.g., CBEST) and have declared the PPS on their objective of study. Additionally, the Certificate in College Counseling allows School Counseling students the ability to concurrently specialize in College Counseling work. Note that the College Counseling Certificate is only available to School Counseling students due to the fact that the College certificate specialization is already embedded in the College Counseling degree option.



**6) Q: Can I apply for the PPS credential only?**

A: If you have already earned a Master's degree in Education, Counseling, Psychology, or Social Work, you can apply for the PPS credential only without pursuing a second master's degree. However, depending on your professional goals, it may be in your best interest to earn a second master's degree. If you are in this situation it is recommended that you consult with a faculty advisor to determine the best program plan for you.

The PPS credential alone requires 48 units of coursework. Please see below regarding transferability of prior coursework to determine if some of your work could be applied to the PPS credential. Note that due to residency, credentialing, and supervision requirements, there is a 9 unit limit on transferring prior coursework to our program. Clinical and supervision courses are not eligible for transfer.

**7) Q: Can I apply for the Certificate in College Counseling only?**

A: The College Counseling Certificate program is only open to CSUDH Counseling program alumni and current School Counseling option students. The Certificate program is designed as an added specialization to our existing program as opposed to a stand-alone certificate and, thus, it would not adequately prepare one for college counseling employment separate from our degree program.

**8) Q: I have taken graduate courses in a prior master's program, how do I know if my previous coursework might be transferrable?**

A: The transferability of previous graduate coursework is dependent upon the following guidelines:

- a) Prior coursework must have been at the graduate level (at the 500 or 600 level).
- b) Courses must have been taken at a WASC accredited university.
- c) Courses must have been earned with a grade of B or better.
- d) Courses must not be older than 7 years from the time you would earn the M.S. or PPS.
- e) Coursework must be equivalent in content and unit load to those in our program.
- f) Coursework that resulted in the completion of a prior master's degree cannot be used towards a second master's, however, it can be applied to the PPS credential.

Additionally due to residency, credentialing, and supervision requirements, there is a 9 unit limit on transferring prior coursework to our program. Clinical and supervision courses are not eligible for transfer.

**9) Q: I read the transferability guidelines, what are the next steps to see whether my prior graduate coursework would transfer?**

A: First, determine that your prior coursework indeed meets the eligibility for transferring work. Then if you believe you meet these guidelines, compare the course descriptions of your prior coursework to the courses required in our program using the course listings provided on our website and the course descriptions in the CSUDH University Catalog (see <http://www.csudh.edu/university-catalog> under



Counseling). This will give you a general idea of what you can request for transferability from a program advisor if you are admitted. Once you are admitted to the program, a faculty advisor would be able to meet with you to finalize transfer work. Unfortunately, we are not able to review potential transfer work for prospective students.

### About Eligibility and the Application Process~

#### **10) Q: How do I submit an application?**

A: There are two parts to the application process: the University application via Cal State Apply at <https://www2.calstate.edu/apply> and the Counseling Program application via our College of Education's (COE) online system at <https://csudh-coe.fluidreview.com> Both applications are online and must be submitted in their entirety by the Feb. 1 deadline in order to be considered for Fall admission.

Some helpful tips when completing your application:

1. When completing the University application, please refer to the step-by-step instructions provided in the *Cal State Apply Instruction Guide for the Counseling Program* available on our website: <https://www.csudh.edu/coe/programs/grad-ed/school-counseling>.
2. It is recommended that you complete the University application two weeks *prior* to starting the Program application to receive a CSUDH student ID # (this does not apply to current or former CSUDH students who already have a student ID #).
3. Familiarize yourself with the required components of the Counseling Program application in advance of completing it. Please see our program flatsheet on our website for more information: <http://www.csudh.edu/coe/programs/grad-ed/school-counseling>.
4. Official transcripts will be needed for both the University and the Counseling Program applications. For the Counseling Program application, you will upload a copy of official transcripts yourself, which means that if you have ordered a paper copy, you will need to open the seal in order to scan and upload them; you can then keep them for your future use. For the University application, when sending your transcript to our Admissions office, electronic transcripts are preferable to paper copies; however, both are acceptable.
5. The Counseling Program application has an opening window date of Dec. 1 and a deadline date of Feb. 1. Therefore, Dec. 1 is when you can first start an application and you must submit it by the Feb. 1 deadline when the online application closes. If you start a Program application and do not complete it by the deadline, it will be locked on Feb. 1 and then re-opened again the following Dec. 1 should you wish to resume your application. Both the University and the Program applications must be submitted in full by the deadline in order to be reviewed. We admit new students for the Fall semesters only.



**11) Q: Do I need to be a teacher to be eligible for admission into the program?**

A: While it is beneficial to have work experience in education or counseling, these backgrounds are not required for admission to the program. We have many students who have come from outside these fields and are equally successful as those who have a teaching background.

**12) Q: Are there prerequisite courses required before I can apply to the program?  
Does my undergraduate degree have to be in a particular major?**

A: No, there are no required pre-requisite courses or particular majors required for admission to the program. A bachelor's degree must be obtained from a regionally accredited university and the undergraduate degree can be earned from any field of study.

**13) Q: My bachelor's degree will be not be posted until the Summer; will I be eligible for Fall admission?**

A: The University requires bachelor degrees to be posted no later than the Spring term of your undergraduate study to be admitted for Fall. Therefore, if your bachelor's degree posts in Summer, you would need to apply for the Fall term in the following year.

**14) Q: Do I need to take the CBEST to be admitted to the program?**

A: If you wish to be admitted to the PPS portion of the program, you must meet the California Basic Skills Requirement as established by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CCTC). The PPS credential is an option for both School and College Counseling students to pursue.

The most common way to meet the CA Basic Skills Requirement is through passage of the California Basic Educational Skills Test (CBEST). You can also review alternative equivalents of meeting CCTC's basic skills requirement at <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/leaflets/cl667.pdf>.

If you have no intention of earning the PPS and just want to earn the M.S. degree in College Counseling, then you do not need to take the CBEST. The CBEST is a state credentialing requirement for School Counselors and does not pertain to College Counseling. However, College option students are encouraged to also earn the PPS credential if they are interested, in which case they would need to have met the basic skills requirement to pursue the PPS credential.

**15) Q: What if I haven't passed the CBEST yet, can I still apply just for the M.S. degree, School Counseling option?**

A: Yes, you can apply for just the M.S. and formally add the PPS objective to your program of study once you pass the CBEST, which must be no later than your first semester in the program. If you are applying to the School Counseling option, you are expected to also earn the PPS credential as these requirements are the same.



It is *strongly* encouraged that you have the CBEST passed prior to application. Note that students will not be able to begin their fieldwork unless the CBEST has been passed and the PPS has been formally added to the objective of study.

**16) Q: What is a Certificate of Clearance and how do I get one?**

**Do I need to get this if I want to pursue the College Counseling option?**

A: The Certificate of Clearance verifies that you have completed CCTC's fingerprint, character, and identification process, which is required for students working with minors. Because *all* of our program students will be working with minor students (even at the college level), all applicants must be cleared. If you have a valid teaching credential or current emergency teaching permit you do not need to get the Certificate of Clearance. For information on how to obtain the Clearance, including a video tutorial, please go to <http://www.ctc.ca.gov/credentials/submit-online.html>.

Live Scan fingerprinting applications can be picked up on campus at the COE Student Services Center (COE 1401). There are several places to have fingerprints scanned, including on the CSUDH campus at Welch Hall in WH 360. For CSUDH Live Scan service information, please go to <https://www.csudhfoundation.com/services/live-scan>.

Students cannot be admitted into the program without a Certificate of Clearance (or a teaching or substitute teaching credential). The Certificate of Clearance must be valid and not expired by the time of application to the program.

If you have applied for the Certificate of Clearance by the application deadline, but CCTC has not completed your processing in time, then state on the Program application that your Clearance is "in progress" and upload verification that you have applied for it (e.g., your Live Scan copy or receipt). If you are eventually offered acceptance, you will need to furnish verification that you have been cleared by CCTC before you can be admitted to the program.

**17) Q: Can a family member, friend, or an individual from my church write one of my letters of recommendation? How do I submit letters of recommendation?**

A: While these people may know you well, we need to have professional references from those who have served as your employer, supervisor, or professor so that they may speak to your potential as a future counselor based on their supervisory role with you.

Your referrers will be contacted directly by the program via the email addresses you provide to request that letters be sent on your behalf. We do not use forms for your referrers to complete, rather we ask that they write on the official letterhead of their place of employment and write *specifically* for the Counseling program. Letters must be recent (i.e. written within the year prior to the year of application due date).



**18) Q: Can I receive assistance in writing my statement of purpose?**

A: Our program does not offer writing assistance for applications. If you are a current student at CSUDH or another university or college, writing help is typically offered through various campus tutoring programs. If you are not currently enrolled in a university and feel you need assistance, it can be useful to ask a trusted individual who writes well for their input. For the best consideration of your statement of purpose, be sure to answer the prompts thoroughly and honestly.

**19) Q: Do I need to take the Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) test?**

A: The GRE is not required for program application, but rather is an option for applicants whose GPA is less than the minimum 3.0 required.

**20) Q: What if my GPA is less than a 3.0?**

A: If you have less than a 3.0 GPA, then you can take the GRE (revised) and try to earn a minimum combined score of 300 on the Verbal and Quantitative Tests to compensate for a lower than requested GPA. Ultimately, it is an applicant's decision whether to apply to the program with less than a 3.0 GPA. While every complete and on-time application will be reviewed regardless of GPA, applications that have higher GPAs (or equivalent GRE scores) are scored more favorably and are more competitive in the review process.

**21) Q: Can I take courses to bring up my GPA?**

A: Taking as many graduate courses necessary to bring your GPA up to a 3.0 prior to applying is not recommended due to time and cost, and due to the lack of certainty that doing so would cause your application to eventually be accepted. Additionally, because application to the program is competitive, meeting the GPA requirement alone does not guarantee admission to the program. Taking lower division courses (e.g., community college coursework) will not count towards building your GPA.

**22) Q: I have prior experience as a counselor. Can my experience be taken into consideration in lieu of a low GPA? Will prior experience increase my chances of acceptance?**

A: Because we do not require applicants to have had a particular work background, it is not a criteria we formally consider for admission and thus it cannot waive the GPA requirement. However, it is indeed valuable for applicants to have had experience in counseling or education as it allows them to better understand the reasons why they want to become a counselor and can lend to a more thoughtful statement of purpose on the application.



**23) Q: Can I take any of your program courses before I apply or am admitted?**

A: No. To ensure that current counseling program students receive the courses they need to graduate, our courses are only open to currently admitted students in the program.

**24) Q: What is the GWAR?**

A: The GWAR stands for the Graduate Writing Assessment Requirement. In almost all cases, incoming graduate students have already fulfilled the GWAR from their undergraduate work. Our University policy states that, effective spring 2018, if an *incoming graduate student earned their baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution in the United States*, then the GWAR has been satisfied.

If you earned your baccalaureate degree outside the U.S. or from a non-English speaking university in the U.S., then you may not have automatically met the GWAR and would need to inquire with the CSUDH Testing Office to further determine equivalency. If you have not met the GWAR, then you will need to satisfy the requirement in your first semester of studies. It is not necessary to satisfy this requirement during the application process.

For more information, please go to the following University website:

<http://www.csudh.edu/tltc/testing-center/gwar>.

**25) Q: What happens after I submit my application?**

A: If BOTH your Program application AND University application are complete, your application will be reviewed by the admissions committee. Application review begins on February 1<sup>st</sup> and approximately 4 weeks after this deadline, selected applicants will be invited for personal interviews on campus for the final part of the admissions process. The committee will then make final admissions decisions and letters of notification will be e-mailed to all applicants. All communication will occur via the email address you enter on your Program application, so please be sure to check your spam/junk folder should you not receive expected correspondence.

**26) Q: What are my chances of being accepted / how many students do you accept?**

A: The chances of acceptance vary each year depending upon how many applications we receive and how many courses we are able to offer for the newly admitted class of students, which is affected by budget and staffing. We typically admit approximately 20 students each fall with an average acceptance rate of 10-15%.

The number of applications we receive greatly exceeds the spaces we have available for admission, which means that there are many applicants who do meet the minimum criteria and still do not get selected for admission. Because our admission is so competitive, we encourage all applicants to apply to multiple programs to increase their chances and timeline of admittance into a counseling program.



**27) Q: If I don't get accepted, can I reapply for the following term?**

A: While you are welcome to reapply if you do not get accepted from your initial application, it is usually within one's best interest to reapply to a new program that may be a better fit altogether. Typically, when applicants widen their opportunities by applying to multiple programs, it increases their chances of acceptance to a counseling program in general and allows for the time, effort, and costs involved in the application process to prove more worthwhile.

*About Application Fees, Tuition, and Scholarships ~*

**28) Q: Is it possible to waive the application fees?**

A: Unfortunately neither the Cal State Apply graduate student application nor the Counseling program application fees can be waived. There are two primary fees associated with applying to the program: \$70 for graduate admission as part of the University (Cal State Apply) application and \$50 for the CSUDH Counseling Program application.

**29) Q: How much is tuition and is Financial Aid available?**

A: Exact tuition information for the most current term can be found on the CSUDH website: <http://www.csudh.edu/financial-aid/cost>.

Tuition fees are based on whether you attend graduate school on a half-time or full-time basis. Half-time graduate student status refers to taking between 1-6 units (the equivalent to 1 or 2 classes in our program). Full-time graduate student status refers to taking 7 or more units (the equivalent to taking 3 or 4 classes in our program). The fees for PPS Credential-only candidates (students who have completed the M.S. degree and are only pursuing the PPS) are slightly lower.

Most of our students do receive some form of Financial Aid, and some competitive scholarships are available for current students through the University and the College of Education. Please go to the University's Financial Aid website for more information: <http://www.csudh.edu/financial-aid/scholarships>.

Note that Federally subsidized financial aid for counseling students is limited to master's degree enrollment only. Therefore, students pursuing only the PPS credential or only the College Certificate are not eligible for *government supported aid*. *Private* sources of loans and aid would still qualify.



## About Fieldwork, Internships, and Graduate Employment ~

### **30) Q: What are the requirements for Fieldwork?**

A: Field-based practice is a requirement in every program objective whether it is for the M.S. degree, PPS Credential, or College Counseling Certificate.

Field-based hour requirements are as follows:

#### College Counseling:

M.S. Counseling, College Counseling = 300 hours (100 Practicum and 200 Fieldwork)

Certificate in College Counseling = 300 hours (100 Practicum and 200 Fieldwork)

#### School Counseling:

\*M.S. Counseling, School Counseling + PPS credential = 900 hours (100 Practicum & 800 Fieldwork)

Of the 800 hours, requirements are as follows:

- 200 hours in high school,
- 200 hours in elementary or middle,
- 200 hours in any level pK-12
- 200 hours from CWA or a College setting

Child Welfare and Attendance Authorization = 150 Fieldwork hours

\* Hour requirements effective Fall 2021, per CCTC.

### **31) Q: Does the program place students at their practicum and fieldwork sites?**

A: Students choose their own placement based on their preferences for population, location, and time. However, we do assist students who may need help in contacting a potential supervisor or site. Our program has partnerships with schools and colleges throughout the region so there are numerous placements available.

### **32) Q: If I work full time, how do I go about earning Fieldwork hours?**

A: Most of our students are working professionals so while completing the required practicum and fieldwork hours does take planning, it is definitely feasible. The Practicum courses for either option require 100 hours each, which is typically very achievable within a 16 week semester. The Fieldwork courses required for the College option (200 hours) and the PPS Credential in School Counseling (800 hours) require more planning and flexibility in order to complete the hours in your desired time frame.

School Counseling Fieldwork is completed over the course of an academic year, concurrently with other coursework.



If you work at a school or college, then you may be able to complete some of your hours at your work site, provided it meets eligibility requirements. Finding opportunities such as late afternoon, evening, or weekend placements can also assist in the completion of Fieldwork hours while keeping current employment. Planning in advance for knowing when you will need extra time to complete Fieldwork around a current job schedule is a necessity. Oftentimes, speaking to one's employer well in advance will allow them to modify your schedule to accommodate your school or Fieldwork needs.

Conversely, some students choose to take a leave of absence or leave their current employment entirely in order to complete their hours in a timely manner and also be able to transition into their preferred position as a counselor. Because Fieldwork occurs near the end of the program, such a change in employment is an expected and desired change for many students. Completing the School Counseling Fieldwork requirements is a significant commitment, however, students choose to complete the hours at their own pace and faculty support students in completing Fieldwork according to a pace that meets their professional obligations. If desired, students may complete the M.S. degree and then continue to finish the Fieldwork requirements for the PPS credential for additional semesters as needed.

**33) Q: Can I get a paid internship when I start my Fieldwork?**

A: Possibly! Funding for paid internships is entirely up to the school, district, or college where you choose to earn your fieldwork hours. Students in our program complete their Fieldwork at the conclusion of the program, so there is plenty of time to plan, budget, and apply for both paid or unpaid positions. Funding availability in both the public schools and colleges for paid counseling internships tends to fluctuate with the economy as well as with any additional resources available to that particular school.

Our program is fully supportive of our students applying for any available internships once they are eligible to do so and we announce internship and employment opportunities as they become available.

**34) Q: Are graduate assistantships, campus employment, or other relevant positions available for program students?**

A: On-campus student employment opportunities are available through the CSUDH Career Center. Additionally, there are both paid and unpaid counseling internships on campus. Off-campus opportunities for graduate student counseling-related employment are announced throughout the year. Most of these types of positions are part-time graduate assistantships at the local community colleges, which require students to be enrolled in a counseling program while working.

*For further information about our application procedures or course requirements, please go to:*

<https://www.csudh.edu/coe/programs/grad-ed/school-counseling>

*or contact the CSUDH College of Education, Division of Graduate Education office at (310) 243-3524.*

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