

Counseling Program (M.S.Ed.)

Youngstown State University
Department of Psychological Sciences and Counseling
Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Science & Education



**Annual Report
2025-2026**

Submitted by Dr. Jake J. Protivnak, Counseling Program Director

YSU Counseling Program
Department of Psychological Sciences & Counseling
2025-2026 Annual Report
Fall 2025, Spring 2026, Summer 2026

Located within the Department of Psychological Sciences and Counseling in the Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Sciences and Education (BCLASSE), the Counseling Program has four CACREP-accredited program tracks to prepare students for careers as professional clinical mental health counselors, school counselors, addiction counselors, college counselors and student affairs professionals.

Mission:

The Counseling Program equips students with knowledge and skills in specialized areas of counseling. Through innovative teaching, clinical supervision, a year-long community field experience, and meeting CACREP-accreditation standards, we develop graduates to serve as counselors and related professionals in addiction counseling, clinical mental health counseling, school counseling, college counseling and student affairs settings.

Vision:

Through teaching, scholarship, and service, the Counseling Program faculty envisions becoming a nationally renowned leader in the development of highly skilled counselors and related professionals who meet the needs of communities in Northeast Ohio and Western Pennsylvania. We aspire to cultivate graduates who provide evidence-based interventions to help individuals achieve their fullest potential.

Academic Focus:

Practical experiential activities are required of students to demonstrate skills from each course, and the graduate program culminates with a year-long 700-hour practicum/internship in the community. The Counseling Program remains committed to its stated mission through ongoing accreditation by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The Counseling Program has full approval by the Ohio Counselor, Social Worker, and Marriage and Family Therapists Board, the Ohio Chemical Dependency Professionals Board, and the Ohio Department of Education. The Counseling Program engages in ongoing program development based on the developments and recommendations of accrediting bodies and licensure boards.

Student Centered:

The Counseling faculty provides a learning climate that is open, accepting, intellectually honest, and professionally challenging for students. Program faculty directly advise and mentor students to enhance students' learning experiences, to serve the community, the counseling profession, and consumers of counseling services. The Counseling Program operates a Community Counseling Clinic, where students are required to provide a semester of counseling to a diverse range of individuals in the community. The YSU Counseling Program maintains a chapter of the International Honor Society for Counselors (Chi Sigma Iota), and another student organization (SALSA), the Student Affairs Leadership Support Association, which provides additional opportunities for student engagement, professional development, community service, leadership, and recognition. Six Counseling Program scholarships are available for students, as well as several Graduate Assistantships. Counseling faculty consistently receive strong teaching evaluations (and other awards recognizing teaching excellence). Current students/alumni often refer friends and family to the Counseling Program because of their positive experience.

Regional / State / National Needs:

Market demand for counselors is strong, as evidenced by an approximately 100% hiring rate for our Counseling Program graduates by community mental health centers, addiction counseling agencies, private practices, schools, and colleges actively seeking positions. Within the tri-state area, YSU is the only Counseling Program that offers four CACREP-accredited program tracks (i.e., Addiction Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, College Counseling & Student Affairs). Remarkably, many of our Counseling Program interns are hired by their agency before they graduate. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), demand remains strong for licensed professional clinical counselors, licensed school counselors, licensed/certified chemical dependency counselors, student affairs professionals, and workers in community and social service organizations. The Counseling field is expected to grow “much faster than average” for all occupations.

Community Impact:

2299 master’s students have graduated (as of Summer 2026) from the Counseling Program since its inception in 1968. The Counseling Program maintains strong partnerships in high-need urban and rural areas for field-based training, resulting in strong connections with alumni, program supervisors, agencies, schools, and community leaders. The Counseling Program has a history of strong service to our community through the field placements of our interns, services delivered by our Community Counseling Clinic, and several contracts for Graduate Assistants working in local school districts and colleges. Each year, Counseling Program interns provide in sum an excess of 20,000 hours of counseling, advising, programming, and other duties to the community. Faculty also engage with the community through their collaborative participation in grants, research, program evaluation, and service on advisory boards for community agencies. Additionally, our student organizations provide several hours of community service.

Highlights:

The Counseling Program faculty has consistently high research productivity, strong teaching evaluations, and service involvement on campus, in the community, and within the profession (e.g., faculty and alumni have served as officers of national and state Counseling organizations). The Counseling Program was a recent recipient of the Outstanding Counselor Education Program Award from the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES). Alumni serve as practitioners, supervisors, and administrators in counseling agencies, schools, and universities in Northeast Ohio, Western Pennsylvania, and across the nation. Most graduates pursue employment in the field of counseling and student affairs; however, some choose to use their Counseling degree in other areas (e.g., the former Mayor of the City of Youngstown, Jamael Tito Brown, is a program graduate). The Counseling Program has been a program of distinction at YSU, thanks to the productivity of its faculty and the success of its alumni.

Summary:

The Counseling Program at Youngstown State University offers the highest academic quality at a low cost, supported by strong financial aid options. With a proven track record of job obtainment, community-engaged internships, and applied learning opportunities, our students graduate fully prepared for meaningful careers in Counseling. Set on a safe and beautiful campus, YSU offers the ideal environment for personal and professional growth.

Counseling Program Descriptive Information

Counseling Program Leadership for 2025-2026:

- Graduate Program Director – Dr. Jake Protivnak
- Program Coordinators
 - Addiction / Clinical Mental Health Counseling – Dr. Victoria Kress
 - College Counseling & Student Affairs – Dr. Maddie Stevens
 - School Counseling – Dr. Jake Protivnak
- CACREP Coordinator – Dr. Victoria Kress
- Community Counseling Clinic Director – Dr. Victoria Kress
- Assessment Coordinator – Dr. Maddie Stevens
- Comprehensive Exam (CPCE) Coordinator – Dr. Jen Yensel
- Minor in Counseling, undergraduate – Dr. Jake Protivnak
- Student Organization Faculty Advisors:
 - Chi Sigma Iota, Eta Chapter – Dr. Jake Protivnak
 - SALSA – Dr. Maddie Stevens

Counseling Faculty Teaching in 2025-2026:

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| • Christine Andujar | • Anne Lally |
| • Crystal Bannon | • Danielle Matos |
| • Angie Cameron | • Jessica McRoberts |
| • Tysa Egleton | • Dr. Kenneth Miller |
| • Meghan Fawcett | • Dr. Jake Protivnak |
| • Rick Fawcett | • Dr. Maddie Stevens |
| • Jessica Gaskel | • Dusty Timmons |
| • Katie Gastaldo | • Sonya Thompson |
| • Carmella Hill | • Dominic Venetti |
| • Joshua Hill | • Dr. Jen Yensel |
| • Jim Hyland | • Kelly Younkens |
| • Dr. Victoria Kress | |

New Faculty/Staff Hired in 2025-2026:

- Dusty Timmons, Part-Time Counseling Faculty (doctoral intern), effective Fall 2025

Departures of Faculty/Staff in 2025-2026:

- (None)

Doctoral Intern (hired as PT Faculty) in 2025-2026:

- Dusty Timmons, Counselor Education Doctoral Student at Kent State University

Counseling Program Facilities:

- Program Office (4th Floor Beeghly Hall)
- Faculty Offices & Classrooms (4th & 3rd Floor Beeghly Hall)
- Community Counseling Clinic (3rd Floor Beeghly Hall)

Counseling Program Online Information:

- Counseling Program Website – www.ysu.edu/COUN

- YSU Graduate Catalog – Counseling Master’s Degree
<https://catalog.ysu.edu/graduate/graduate-programs/master-science-education-counseling/>
- YSU Graduate Catalog – Post-Master’s in Counseling: Certificate for Counseling Practice
<https://catalog.ysu.edu/graduate/graduate-programs/certcounseling/>
- YSU Undergraduate Catalog – Minor in Counseling
<https://catalog.ysu.edu/undergraduate/colleges-programs/college-liberal-arts-social-sciences-education/departments-psychology/minor-in-counseling/>
- Eta Chapter, Chi Sigma Iota website - <https://www.csi-net.org/group/eta>

Counseling Program Social Media:

- Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ysucoun>
- Twitter/X - https://twitter.com/ysu_coun
- Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/ysu_coun/
- LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/youngstown-state-university-counseling-program/>
- YouTube - https://www.youtube.com/@ysu_coun

Counseling Program Assessment/Outcomes:

- Assessment Report - <https://explore.ysu.edu/beeghly-college-of-liberal-arts-social-sciences-education-counseling-msed/>
- Student Outcomes - <https://explore.ysu.edu/beeghly-college-of-liberal-arts-social-sciences-education-counseling-msed/>

Counseling Program Documents / Data:

- Physical files – 4th floor storage room, 3rd Floor storage closets
- Digital files – YSU Teams/One Drive (CACREP; Counseling Program, etc.)

Counseling Program Modifications or Substantial Changes in 2025-2026:

- Continue the process of making curricular and assessment changes to align with the CACREP 2024 Standards (e.g., updated course syllabi, rubrics, etc.)

Faculty Productivity in 2025-2026:

Review faculty pages, which include a list of awards, intellectual contributions, professional service, and public service.

- Dr. Victoria Kress - <https://ysu.edu/people/victoria-kress>
- Dr. Kenneth Miller - <https://ysu.edu/people/kenneth-miller>
- Dr. Jake Protivnak - <https://ysu.edu/people/jake-protivnak>
- Dr. Maddie Stevens - <https://ysu.edu/people/madeleine-stevens>
- Dr. Jen Yensel - <https://ysu.edu/people/jennifer-yensel>

Community / Campus Involvement: (examples)

- The **Counseling Program** and Eta Chapter CSI hosted a panel of YSU Counseling Program Alumni who discussed their experiences in the counseling profession and answered questions in February 2026.
 - **Rochelle Rulli-Perrotta**, Counselor at Alta Behavioral Healthcare
 - **Danielle Matos**, School Counselor at Western Reserve Local School District
 - **Joshua R. Hill**, Addiction Counselor, Safe Harbor Recovery

- **Taylor Blandine**, Senior Athletic Academic Advisor/Director of Football Academic at Youngstown State University
- **Dr. Francine Packard**, Counselor & Director of Student Counseling Services at Youngstown State University
- **Community Advisory Board Members** from Addiction Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, and College Counseling & Student Affairs met in Beeghly Hall in April 2026 to connect with one another. The faculty met in small groups with advisory board members by program area to learn how we can continue to adapt our Counseling Program to produce highly knowledgeable and skilled graduates to meet the needs of area agencies, schools, and institutions.
- Counseling program students **Sam Costarella, Kieron Grubbs, Sierra Ellis, and Michelle Das** presented at the ACES Conference in Philadelphia in October 2025 on the history of Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota.
- Counseling program students **Adiana Jones, Fran Shaw, and Sherry Thistlewaite** provided wellness resources and shared information about the graduate Counseling Program at the Wellness Across Lifespan Health Fair on Saturday, October 11th.
- **Dr. Jennifer Yensel** delivered a Department Colloquium talk on Thursday, November 20th, on the topic of 'Interactive and Creative Treatment Planning Across the Lifespan.'
- On February 4th, 2026, counseling program students **Allison Augustine, Sierra Kieffer, Jessie Coleman, Ariana Jones, Samantha Hollis, Jawna Fobes, and Michelle Das** participated in the Donut Worry Anxiety Screening Event coordinated by **Dr. Francine Packard** and Youngstown State University's **Student Counseling Services**.
- **Meghan Fawcett**, Counseling Faculty and alumni, presented to undergraduates about 'Careers with a Psychology Major' in February 2026.
- Counseling program students, **Jawna Fobes, Jessie Coleman, Samantha Hollis, Michelle Das, and Jessica Rojas** participated in the Smart Sips Smart Choices Alcohol Screening Event on Wednesday, February 11th, 2026, coordinated by **Dr. Francine Packard** and Youngstown State University's **Student Counseling Services**.
- Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota officers **Samantha Costarella, Kieron Grubbs, and Michelle Das** participated in a panel on February 18th, 2026, featuring YSU counseling program alumni **Taylor Blandine, Joshua Hill, Daneille Matos, Rochelle Rulli-Perrotta, and Dr. Francine Packard**.
- Counseling program students and Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota members, **Sierra Kieffer, Sarah DeLucia, Allison Augustine, Samantha Costarella, and Anna Chapman** promoted the counseling honor society and counseling program in March 2026 in the lobby of Beeghly Hall.
- **Sarah DeLucia**, Eta Chapter CSI President, and **Allison Augustine**, CSI member, participated in the Mental Health Awareness 'R U OK Day' at the Mahoning County Career and Technical Center in May 2026.

Student Honors & Awards - Examples

Student Recognition:

Students and faculty were recognized at the Annual Student Awards banquet sponsored by the Division of Student Affairs, Student Activities, and Student Government Association (SGA) on Thursday, April 23, 2026, in Stambaugh Auditorium. Counseling student **Sherry Thislewaite** was recognized as one of the 2025-2026 Student Presidential Mentors.

Part-Time Faculty Recognition:

Danielle Matos, Counseling Program Faculty, received the Outstanding BCLASSE Part-Time Faculty Award YSU Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, and Education Honors Convocation on April 27th, 2026.

2026 Counseling Program Scholarships:

Congrats to the following students who received the 2026 Counseling Program Youngstown State University scholarships!

- **Samantha Hollis** - Catherine Wrynn and Kenneth P. Baker Graduate Scholarship
- **Joseph Caruso-Harris** - Charles H. Whitman Student Services Graduate Scholarship
- **Kennedy Lisowski & Melissa Tricket** - Dr. Lawrence DiRusso Scholarship in Counseling
- **Melisa Tricket** - Dr. Robert A. DiGiulio Scholarship
- **Cailin Chumita & Kennedy Lisowski** - Harvey Neal Kretzer Memorial Scholarship

The scholarships were awarded to seven Counseling Program students. They were recognized at the 2026 Beeghly College of Liberal Arts, Social Sciences, & Education (BCLASSE) Honors Convocation on Tuesday, April 27th at 5:30 p.m. in the Kilcawley Center, Chestnut Room. Thank you to the generous donors to the YSU Counseling Program who made this possible. If you want to donate to or start a scholarship for Counseling students, contact the Youngstown State University Foundation at <https://ysufoundation.org/>.

Eta Chapter, Chi Sigma Iota:

Counseling Program graduate students were inducted into Eta Chapter, Chi Sigma Iota, on Friday, April 3rd at the 41st Annual CSI Induction Ceremony in McKay Auditorium in Beeghly Hall. **Dr. Amy Ross**, Licensed Professional Clinical Counselor, National Certified Counselor, and Mission Coordinator for Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society International, was the guest speaker.

32 graduate Counseling Program students inducted into the International Honor Society for Counselors: **Allison Augustine; Brooklyn Bokan; Katherine Brooks; Amy Cakir; Anna Chapman; Cailin Chumita; Jessie Coleman; Colleen Cooper; Belle Cope; Sarah DeLucia; Brian Detec; Naomi Domitrovich; Tiaunnah El-Amin; Lisa Fitzgerald-Green; Jawna Fobes; Zac Hammond; McKenzie Heagarty; Samantha Hollis; Sierra Kieffer; Kayla Klacik; Haley Lewis; Kennedy Lisowski; Emily Mook; Molly Nielsen; Casey Price; Madison Pushay; Madison Sapp; Lauren Sheehan; Sierra Suarez; Melissa Trickett; Richard Troisi; Hannah Vireden.** Congrats to the following 2026 awardees of the Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) Counseling Program Awards. **Dr. Francine Packard**, the Director of YSU Student Counseling, received the Eta Chapter CSI Outstanding Practitioner Award. Dr. Packard is a 2001 graduate of the Counseling Program. **Sierra Kieffer**, a Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduate student, received the Eta Chapter CSI Outstanding Master's Student Award.

Eta Chapter, CSI Officers for 2025-2026:

President – Samantha Cosatrella
Vice-President – Kieron Grubbs
Treasurer – Michelle Das
Secretary – Sierra Ellis

Eta Chapter, CSI Officers for 2026-2027:

President – Sarah DeLucia
Vice-President – Michelle Das
Treasurer – Belle Cope
Secretary – Cailin Chumita

Eta Chapter, CSI Endowment Established:

Eta Chapter, Chi Sigma Iota (CSI) has established the 'Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota Counseling Academic and Professional Honor Society Endowment' through the Youngstown State University Foundation, in recognition of the 40th Anniversary of Eta Chapter of CSI, which was chartered at YSU on September 9, 1985. The 2025-26 Eta Chapter CSI Officers (**Samantha Cosatrella, Kieron Grubbs, Michelle Das, and Sierra Ellis**) and Chapter Faculty Advisor, **Dr. Jake Protivnak**, approved and facilitated the endowment creation. Beginning in Fall 2025, this will provide annual funding for Eta Chapter CSI activities, allowing alumni and community members to donate directly to support the counseling student organization's initiatives. Individuals interested in making tax-deductible contributions to grow the Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota endowment can contact **Alena Burzynski**, Development Officer at YSU Foundation, at aburzynski@ysufoundation.org, 330-941-2134, or donate directly through the YSU Foundation website (<https://ysufoundation.org/give-now/>) by designating "Eta Chapter Chi Sigma Iota Endowment."

Student Affairs Leadership Support Association (SALSA):

A student organization with a focus on issues and events applicable to graduate students within the College Counseling and Student Affairs counseling program track.

SALSA Officers for 2025-2026:

- President – Joel Straley
- Vice-President – Oliver Roose
- Secretary/Treasurer - Lauren Sheehan

SALSA Officers for 2026-2027:

- President – Brooklyn Bokan
- Vice-President – Oliver Roose
- Secretary/Treasurer -Lisa Green-Fitzgerald

Counseling Program Graduates in 2025-2026

Fall 2025 – 20 Counseling Program students received their master's degrees.

- Hannah Allen
- Amber Baxter
- Madisyn Carter
- William Clark
- Lisa Deemer
- Lisa Denney
- DJ Gerner
- Cat Haglan
- Jimmy Jones
- Mone Knowles
- Mike Morris

- Taryn Patterson
- Lauryn Rapone
- Nathan Ritch
- Cassidy Sharper
- Donivan Smith
- Rachael Smith
- A'Sha Thomas
- Gwen West
- Ray Westhead

Spring 2026 - 9 Counseling Programs students received their master's degrees.

- Cory Bongivengo
- Andrea Boyle
- Kenyotta Clinkscale
- Shaiyla Hakeem
- Jessica Johnson
- Nicole McCurry
- Emily Mook
- Lauren Sheehan
- Joel Straley

Summer 2026 - 21 Counseling Programs students received their master's degrees.

- Jenna Allender
- Angela Banks
- Mark Blatz
- Faith Burch
- Julia Cappitte
- Sam Costarella
- Nikolas Dowell
- Caylee Duskey
- Sierra Ellis
- Christian Frano
- Seneca Fuller
- Kieron Grubbs
- Ariana Jones
- Maggie McKernan
- Thomas Mitchell
- Mary Nyers
- Cali Richardson
- Kyle Searles
- Chelbey Trump
- Ally Ward
- Sydney Whipkey

Community Partnerships in 2025-2026 (examples)

Addiction Counseling & Clinical Mental Health Counseling (field placement sites)

- Alta Behavioral Healthcare Group
- Cadence Care Network
- Churchill Counseling
- Compass Family and Community Services
- Comprehensive Psychiatry
- Empower
- Greentree Counseling Center
- Insight Clinical Counseling and Wellness
- Leading Lantern
- Meridian
- Natura
- New Day
- NYAP
- Ohio State Penitentiary
- PsyCare
- Ravenwood Health
- Renewing Hope
- Safe Harbor Recovery
- The Centers
- Thrive
- Travco
- Valley Counseling
- Village Network
- Wellness Grove
- Youngstown State University – Student Counseling Services

College Counseling & Student Affairs (field placement site)

- Youngstown State University

School Counseling (field placement sites)

- Boardman Schools
- Brookfield High School
- Champion Elementary School
- Columbiana High School
- Girard City Schools
- Jackson Milton Elementary School
- Lakeview Local High School
- Mahoning County Career and Technical Center
- Niles McKinley High School
- Springfield Local Middle School
- Volney Rodgers Elementary School
- Youngstown City School District