

DEPARTMENT OF PATIENT COUNSELING

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Patient counseling is the practice of communicating empathic concern, support and sensitive spiritual counsel to the physically or emotionally troubled person in the traumas of life. There is a long history of a concerted effort toward this end at VCU Health. With the appointment of Dr. George D. Ossman as chaplain in 1943, the administration gave clear evidence of its awareness of the need for a specialized caring ministry to hospitalized patients and their families.

The chaplaincy program was significantly expanded in 1958 and was accredited to begin the education and clinical training of persons in patient counseling. Since then, a continuous program has been in existence and has evolved into the present program in patient counseling. Patient counseling, as it exists today, became an integrated program in the then-School of Allied Health Professions in 1970. A comprehensive curriculum review was completed in 1999.

With the rapid growth of health care and the increasingly complex problems of medical ethics and viable delivery systems, it is very important to educate qualified persons to deal with the human dimensions of illness as well as the personal and family stressors related to it. Through this program, VCU has an opportunity to make an impact upon health care education by emphasizing the spiritual dimension of human needs in life crises. By so doing, this university has a significant role to play in the important task of keeping health care holistic and utilizing technical and scientific methodology in the context of a deep respect for the total life of persons.

Accreditation

The clinical pastoral education portion of the program is accredited by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education Inc (<https://www.acpe.edu/>). and is offered in collaboration with VCU Health. Virginia Commonwealth University/VCU Health is accredited to offer CPE (Levels I/II) and Certified Educator CPE by ACPE: The Standard for Spiritual Care and Education, ACPE, Inc. 1 Concourse Pkwy, Suite 800 Atlanta, GA, 30328 URL: www.acpe.edu (<http://www.acpe.edu/>)

Objectives

The programs in patient counseling are designed to assist an individual to work in the health field as one skilled in dealing with the whole person in the context of life's crises and in a cooperative interprofessional team approach. The programs are offered to persons who have an existing identity in a helping or counseling profession. This includes clergy, social workers, institutional counselors, education specialists, psychologists, community health workers and others in the health care professions.

Facilities

The College of Health Professions is the base for the educational program, and limited space is available in clinical areas to work with persons and families in crisis. The Main Hospital, mezzanine level, contains the chapel, family consultation room and administrative offices.

Code of ethics

The professional behavior of the student is expected to be in accordance with the Code of Professional Ethics, as adopted by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education, Inc. and the Code of Ethics of the Association of Professional Chaplains.

Student responsibilities

Students serve in the dual capacity of providing pastoral care service while learning. Extensive clinical involvement, including night and weekend responsibilities, is required for selected courses and clinical pastoral education credit. Each student receives individual supervision by a member of the faculty.

Students who are unsuccessful in demonstrating completion of designated clinical pastoral education outcomes in any program will be required to develop with a faculty mentor an individualized plan of study toward their completion. Typically, this plan will be accomplished through additional course work or a directed independent study.

Continuation requirements, advising, transfer and part-time status

A student must maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0 in all course work completed at VCU. A student who falls below that minimum will have one semester to remedy the deficiency.

A student must register for at least one credit hour each academic year for continuation in the program. Any student who fails to register must have prior approval to do so or be dropped from the program and must reapply for reinstatement.

There is a five calendar-year maximum for students to complete the Master of Science degree and a seven calendar-year maximum for the dual degree. The graduate certificate program must be completed within a four calendar-year maximum. Part-time students who wish to accumulate concurrent ACPE credit need to be sure that course work is completed in accordance with ACPE standards.

A maximum of eight credits may be transferred from another university toward the Master of Science course requirements provided these credits have not been applied to a previous degree. A maximum of one-third of the didactic hours may be transferred from another VCU program. Dual-degree candidates may apply six credits from their seminary studies to the VCU degree. Transfer is given at the discretion of the chair after consultation with the faculty, subject to university approval. Credits are not transferable to either of the certificate programs.

Students who have been admitted to the graduate certificate program may be admitted to the Master of Science degree with advanced standing after the completion of at least 18 credits with a B or better. All credits of a B or better will transfer to the degree program.

Upon admission to all programs students will be assigned a faculty adviser.

Students who complete the requirements for the below will receive a Master of Science in Patient Counseling.

- Patient Counseling, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in accelerated chaplain certification (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/patient-counseling-ms-accelerated-chaplain-certification-concentration/>)

- Patient Counseling, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in certified educator clinical pastoral education (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/patient-counseling-ms-concentration-certified-educator-clinical-pastoral-education/>)
- Patient Counseling, Master of Science (M.S.) with a concentration in chaplain certification (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/patient-counseling-ms-concentration-chaplain-certification/>)

Students who complete the requirements for the below will receive a Certificate in Patient Counseling.

- Patient Counseling, Certificate in (Post-baccalaureate graduate certificate) (<https://bulletin.vcu.edu/graduate/school-allied-health-professions/patient-counseling/patient-counseling-certificate/>)