

Frequently Asked Questions About The Counselor Education Program at Westminster College

1. Why the Westminster College's Counselor Education program?

- The program is structured to meet the needs of students wishing to be certified as a School Counselor in Pennsylvania or licensed as a School Counselor in Ohio.
- The curriculum is specifically tailored preparing students to work as professional school counselors. This differs from most counselor education programs in which the curriculum must also meet the learning needs for mental health counselors, community counselors or higher education student services. Our focus is much more concentrated on the needs of school counseling students and is not diverted by the learning needs of those pursuing other career paths.
- The faculty understands the needs of adult learners who work full time, have families and/or other important obligations. We structure the learning expectations, schedule and environment with these issues in mind.
- The faculty is guided by two overarching values which govern all of our work with students. That is, “teach our students well” and “treat our students well.” The faculty believes and has witnessed that when these values are lived out in our dealings with students, the most positive personal and educational outcomes occur.
- The faculty brings many years of relevant counseling, teaching and scholarship experiences into learning encounters with students.
- The Counselor Education faculty is available for advisement and consultation at times that are convenient to the student.
- The Practicum and Internship experiences are individually tailored to each student's unique needs and circumstances. Students are permitted to complete the Practicum and Internship in the building in which they work and do not have to take a leave of absence from work or a sabbatical leave.

- Being a private college with historical church ties, discussion of spiritual matters, faith and religion as they relate to human development and counseling are encouraged.

2. Will I be able to be certified in Pennsylvania as a school counselor?

The Counselor Education Program is accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education. Graduates of the program who completed an internship are eligible for either the Elementary or Secondary School Counselor certification depending on the place in which the internship is completed.

3. Will I be able to be licensed in Ohio as a school counselor?

Students who complete the requisite course of study for Pennsylvania certification (K-6 and 7-12) are eligible to apply for licensure (K-12) as a school counselor in Ohio. Many of our graduates are licensed as K-12 school counselors and are employed in schools throughout northeastern Ohio.

4. Do I need a teaching certificate or education degree to become a school counselor?

No. Neither teaching certification nor an education degree is required to become a School Counselor in Pennsylvania or Ohio or most other states in the U.S. Having teaching experience does present the student with certain educational and experiential advantages over those who do not have experience in teaching. Conversely, having experiences other than as a teacher can provide different and powerful advantages over those with teaching experience. The faculty believes that the program will provide challenging and unique learning experiences in which all students will be prepared to be competent school counselors.

5. When do classes meet and how long is each class?

For fall and spring semester courses, each class meets for three hours, one night a week. Class meeting times are primarily in the evenings on Monday through Thursday. Summer session classes are offered in various formats. You can also take some classes fully online.

6. What are the admissions requirements?

An undergraduate GPA of at least 3.0, outstanding letters of recommendation, and a writing sample are the minimum requirements. See the Graduate Catalog for more details.

7. What are the practicum and internship requirements

The Practicum is a one hundred hour school based experience in which the student works under the supervision of a certified or licensed school counselor and provides individual and group counseling to students. The Practicum serves as a prerequisite for the School Counseling Internship in which the student extends his or her experience to include consultation services, large group guidance and program coordination.

8. Is there a comprehensive examination or thesis?

For new students, a practitioner research report is required. More guidance will be provided by your coordinator as you move through your program.

9. Is the program accredited?

Yes. Westminster College is fully accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. The Counselor Education program is accredited by Pennsylvania Department of Education for the preparation of students for Elementary School Counselor and Secondary School Counselor certifications.

10. Who is on the faculty and what are their qualifications?

The faculty includes talented and experienced professional counselors and educators with specific expertise in subject areas.

11. What does the student body of your program look like?

The student body is a vibrant learning community of professionals with varied career and educational backgrounds. Students range in age from the early twenties to those in their fifties and are from many cultural and racial groups. Students come from throughout western Pennsylvania and eastern Ohio; most live within a 30 to 40 minute drive from Westminster College but some come from hours away.

12. Are there assistantships available?

Presently, there are no assistantships available.

13. What kind of financial aid is available?

Currently, the Graduate Program offers three scholarships: the Henderson Scholarship, The McCauley Scholarship and the Willson Family Scholarship.

Application information is available with the Graduate Studies Secretary in Old Main 109.

14. How safe is the campus?

The campus is located in the borough of New Wilmington, Pennsylvania which is situated in the midst of Amish country. The crime rate is particularly low for this town of 2,400 residents. Campus security services personnel are on duty 24 hours a day and create a safe environment for students, faculty and visitors. Statistics on campus and community safety can be found on the Safety and Security area of the college's web page.

17. What standardized tests will I have to take to become certified or licensed?

Students must take and pass the PRAXIS examination (0482) to be eligible for certification and/or licensure. Information about the examination and application materials may be found at <http://www.ets.org>. Students in Pennsylvania who have never been issued a certificate of any kind by the Pennsylvania Department of Education must also take and pass the PRAXIS Reading, Writing, and Mathematics Pre-Professional Skills Tests (PPST). Ohio students have separate requirements – consult the School Counseling Handbook or Graduate Catalog for more details.

16. How can I get more information?

Further information about the Counselor Education program can be found by calling The Adult & Graduate Studies Office at 724-946-7874.