

MFT BULLETIN

2023- 2024 NEWSLETTER



PROGRAM UPDATES

Currently, the program consists of [49 students](#) and [6 faculty members](#), including two adjunct faculty and our FamilyWorks Clinical Coordinator.



In Winter 2024, FamilyWorks Clinic will move to main campus, relocating to the newly-renovated Farber Hall!



In this newsletter:

[Program Updates](#)

[Graduating Class of 2024](#)

[Student Outreach](#)

[Community Connections](#)

[FamilyWorks Clinic Update](#)

[Student Spotlights](#)

[Student Research](#)

[Alumni Spotlights](#)

[Program Events](#)

[MFT State News](#)

[Stakeholders Feedback](#)

MORE PROGRAM UPDATES

CLINICAL UNDERGRADUATE INTERNSHIP

Provides undergraduate students the opportunity to participate in an internship that offers hands-on experience as they learn what it means to work with families, individuals, couples, and children.

87 undergraduate interns since Spring 2020

100% of interns would highly recommend the internship to other students.

Over 70% learned how Marriage and Family Therapists work.

100% gained a better understanding of various mental health fields.

100% gained valuable skills and knowledge for their future career education.



"This internship gave me lots of helpful insight especially with the field that I want to pursue in graduate school. It gave me a good foundation of ethics and what I should expect with some of my graduate programs. It also gave me the opportunity to see how graduate school expectations are different than what I experience as an undergraduate." - Previous MFT Undergraduate Intern

CONGRATS ON GRADUATING!

Our second-year students graced the stage of the Graduate commencement this month! They now set their sights on post-graduation life.



STUDENT OUTREACH

Pre-Clinically Active Students have been on the move doing community outreach. They've gotten the word out about our clinic at events like Pride, The Happening, and DeStress Fest!



Think your business, organization, event, etc. would benefit from learning about our services?

[Fill out an outreach request by visiting this webpage!](#)



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

CAMP LEAN ON ME

Children gathered from all over South Georgia and North Florida to memorialize their loved ones at Camp Lean on Me. They did arts and crafts, engaged in group counseling sessions, and enjoyed recreational activities that kept smiles on their faces all afternoon. On the final day of the two-day camp, their families joined them for a memorial balloon release.



We have volunteered with Hospice of South Georgia to help provide this camp for several years. Student therapy interns act as co-counselors, working alongside professional counselors who volunteer their time to facilitate the grief groups. Other MFT students provided additional support as camp buddies.



COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

LGBTQ+ SUPPORT GROUPS

**New queer support groups will start
Fall 2024, August 21st, 2024, 6:30 pm.**

1st/3rd Wed. is for community support.
2nd/4th Wed. focuses on queer sobriety.

In Fall 2024, a group of therapist interns created ***Inclusion Fusion***, an LGBTQ+ ally support group for community members.

Across **7 weeks** with **13+** participants, the group covered topics of relationships, visibility, discrimination, and suicidality.



EMORY FARMWORKERS PROJECT

The Emory Farmworker Project is a collaborative service-learning project run by the Emory Physician Assistant Program. PA, PT, MFT, other health professions students, volunteers, and community partners travel around South Georgia to provide free, outpatient care to medically-underserved migrant farmworkers and their families.



In 2023, **200+** health professions volunteered and provided **1,299** patients with medical, dental, and mental health care.

Overall, **\$200,000** of free healthcare was provided!

FAMILYWORKS CLINIC UPDATE

Data gathered from our client scheduling book and client satisfaction survey indicate that:



**3583 sessions
were scheduled
in 2023.**



**95% of clients
described their
therapist as very
helpful.**



**~40% of FamilyWorks
clients heard about us
through word-of-
mouth.**



STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS



Debbie Vizcarrondo led **Mental Health Workshops** hosted by the **nonprofit Latino Community Fund Georgia**. During these sessions, she delivered a presentation in Spanish on mental health and well-being for local community members, sharing strategies and mindfulness activities to help reduce stress and anxiety.

Nolan King received the College of Education and Human Services award for **2024 Outstanding Student in Marriage and Family Therapy**. This annual award is given to a student who demonstrates commitment to and excellence in learning, professional development, and clinical practice.



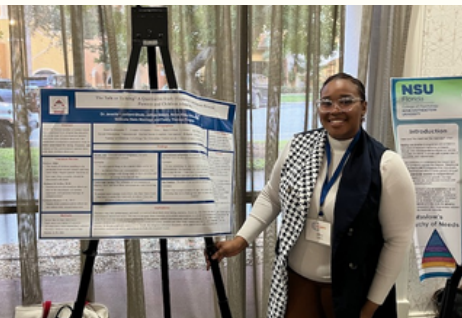
Ethan Williams was recognized as the **Graduate Assistant of the Year** for the academic year 2023-2024, for demonstrating reliability, delivering work of outstanding quality, taking initiative, maintaining a high level of professionalism, and infusing his work with a unique touch.

JaNiya Gibson and Nelson Graves are fellow recipients of the prestigious **FAHS Minority Fellowship Program (MFP-Y)**, a grant through AAMFT's Research and Education Foundation dedicated to expanding the delivery of culturally competent mental health and substance abuse services, providing quality care to underserved minority populations, and supporting culturally competent Marriage and Family Therapists.



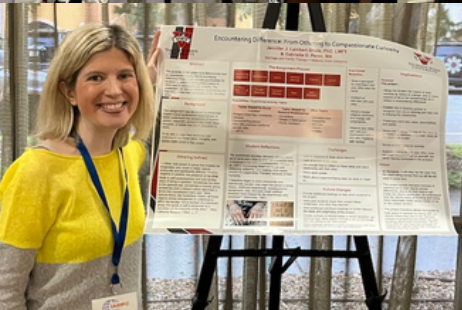
STUDENT RESEARCH

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELORS (IAMFC)



The Talk or Talking? A Qualitative Study Exploring Conversations Between Parents and Children About Sex

Presented by: JaNiya Gibson, Nolan King, Shea Walker, & Dr. Jennifer Lambert-Shute



Encountering Difference: From Othering to Compassionate Curiosity

Presented by: Gabrielle Perez, MA & Dr. Jennifer Lambert-Shute

A handful of MFT students traveled to the 2024 IAMFC World Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida to present their student research.

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

Shea Walker, Debbie Vizcarrondo, and Nelson Graves presented their research, "COVID-19 Remote Work: Families Adapting to the New Normal."

Terri Funk and Sara Hathaway presented their research, "You Want to Talk About What? Sexual Communication with Couples."



REGIONAL RESEARCH PRESENTATIONS



Sponsored by GAMFT and the VSU
MFT Program



Telai Sharpe, Daijah Miller, Tyena' Hutton, and Kennise Wilcox presented their research, "Exploring Intimacy: A Study on the Impact of Sexual Experimentation on Sexual Relationships."



Leah Harrison, Jarion Jolly, Janell Mills, Ayanna Lowe, and Daniel Weaver presented their research, "Rated R for Romance: Porn and Romantic Relationships."



Ashley Figueroa, Africa Pippin, Ariah Jones, and Aamira Lomax presented their research, "Love in the Time of Likes: Exploring Social Media's Influence on Romantic Relationships."



Caroline Jones, Rolanda Carter, Tashariya Wilson, Griffin Reddick, and Maleeka Williams presented their research, "Exploring Familial Relationships of First-Generational College Students of Color."



Katia Galvan, Marley Lentine-Brown, and Christina Aresty presented their research, "LGBTQIA+ Adults and Their Experiences Growing Up in a Christian Household."



Briley Hearne, Brandon Booker, Amiyah Bonnell, Nia Luke, and Addalyn Gillard presented their research titled "Perceptions of Romantic Relationships by Children of Divorce."

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHTS

We love hearing from our alumni and celebrating their accomplishments.
If you are an alumni, please let us know how you are doing.



Danerys Crown is the recipient of the **2023 Distinguished Alumni for the Dewar College of Education and Human Services**. She graduated in 2011 with her Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Valdosta State University. She is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and an AAMFT-approved supervisor. Danerys has a decade of experience providing individual, couples, and group therapy for combat veterans and their families at the Lakeland Vet Center (2013-2017) and Lakeland Community Outpatient VA Clinic (2017-present).

Dr. Katelyn Coburn, an assistant professor in the Department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL), has been honored with the **2024 College of Education and Human Services Outstanding Teaching Award**. Katelyn earned their PhD in Couple and Family Therapy from Kansas State University in May of 2021 and completed their master's degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at Valdosta State University in July of 2017. Katelyn is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist in the state of Kansas and an AAMFT-approved supervisor.



CONNECT WITH US



MFT Program



CHECK US OUT ON INSTAGRAM,
FACEBOOK, AND GOOGLE.

FOLLOW, LIKE, REVIEW, LEAVE
SUGGESTIONS, ENGAGE!



FamilyWorks

PAST PROGRAM EVENTS

In Spring 2024, GAMFT and the MFT Program hosted Dr. Racine Henry, a program alumnus and distinguished faculty member at Northwestern University. She delivered a presentation on "Working Ethically with Black Couples" and introduced her own therapy model, Integrative Culinary Therapy.



Dr. Douglas Flemons, Professor Emeritus of Family Therapy and Former Co-Director of the Office of Suicide and Violence Prevention at Nova Southeastern University joined us in Fall 2023 to facilitate an educational workshop about empathy from a relational lens.

The MFT program hosted alumni events in both Fall 2023 and Spring 2024, providing opportunities for graduates to gather, reconnect, and network.



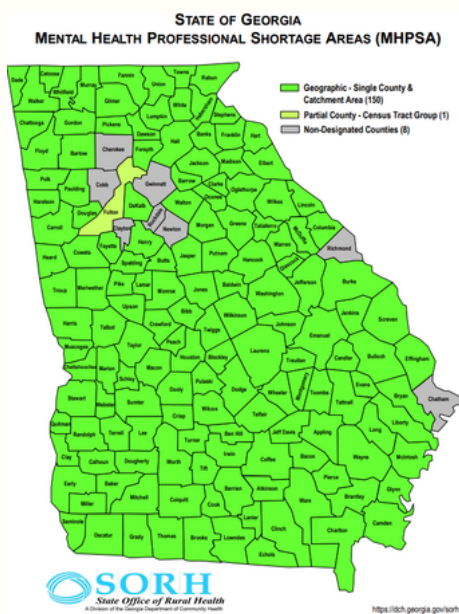
EXCITING NEWS AT THE STATE LEVEL

In the past month, Georgia Governor Brian Kemp signed two bills into law that will greatly benefit Marriage and Family Therapists in Georgia!

SB 480

allows healthcare professionals working in mental health and substance abuse to apply for funds to pay off student loans, if the worker is caring for “underserved youth” or practicing in underserved geographic areas.

More information about how to apply for this loan forgiveness will be available in August by visiting the [Georgia Board of Health Care Workforce website](#).



SB 373

introduces licensure portability for MFTs into Georgia law!

The success of this bill in Georgia follows success in five other Phase 1 states, including: Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, Iowa, and Arizona. These developments have opened up unprecedented opportunities for Georgia MFTs, as they can now expand their practice options by providing services in other states that have also adopted licensure portability laws. Likewise, MFTs from other states can now pursue licensure in Georgia more seamlessly, and benefit from the removal of unnecessary barriers and bureaucratic hurdles.



EXCITING NEWS AT THE STATE LEVEL

New programs are being introduced at the state level to support students pursuing their education in mental health fields.

BHP SCL

*Behavioral Health Professions Service
Cancelable Loan Program*

Students in eligible programs can apply for a state loan that, upon graduation and after fulfilling the requirement of obtaining a Georgia license and working at an eligible employment site, results in the cancellation. For more details and to find out how to apply, please refer to [GA Futures](#).

is a state of Georgia service cancelable loan program aimed at attracting and retaining residents for eligible behavioral health advanced degree programs, leading to licensure as clinicians in Georgia.

GAfutures
Explore. Plan. Succeed.

NMHWAC

*National Mental Health Workforce Acceleration
Collaborative*

The VSU MFT program was selected as an academic partner for the Pre-Masters Fellowship Program, securing two fellowship awards for our eligible students. These students can look forward to receiving financial support, mentorship, and training opportunities.

is an initiative to increase the number of qualified mental health clinicians by improving financial and educational support for students in behavioral health graduate programs.

NATIONAL COUNCIL
for Mental Wellbeing

FEEDBACK FROM OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The program considers both current students and alumni as communities of interest (COI), or stakeholders of the program, and we value your feedback. As you probably already know, one of the ways the program solicits your feedback is through surveys. Several times throughout the year, the program sends out a number of surveys to you, our COI, asking for your feedback regarding different topics. Below, is a snapshot of the results we received from your feedback.

DIVERSE, MARGINALIZED, & UNDERSERVED POPULATION SURVEY

100% of students believe the program has a climate of safety, respect, and appreciation for all learners.

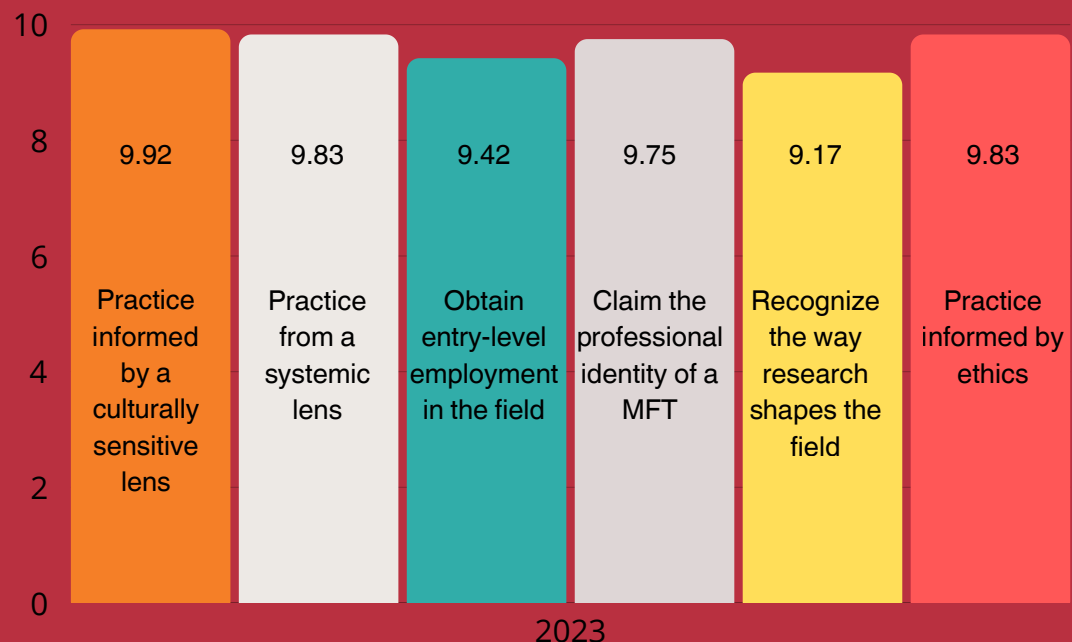
100% of students perceive the faculty as contributing to a safe, respectful, and appreciative environment.

Given every fall, the purpose of the DMU survey is to gain a better understanding of the experiences of current students and faculty regarding safety, respect, and appreciation for those who self-identify as a member of an underrepresented, non-majority group or population.

*Data taken from participants who answered with a score of 4 or higher (1 = Not at all, 5= Absolutely).

EXIT SURVEY

The Exit Survey asks soon-to-be graduates to provide feedback on the program. Students rate on a scale of 1-10 (1=disagree, 10=agree) how well their education and training prepared them in each SLO area.



IMPORTANT PROGRAM UPDATE

FACULTY EFFECTIVENESS

You may have noticed some new faces listed at the top of the newsletter in the program updates. Dr. Garcia recently left the program, and we have incorporated a couple of outstanding adjunct faculty members. This change in faculty composition prompted a review of faculty effectiveness.

As shown in this chart, faculty effectiveness reflects performance across teaching, research, and service and documents MFT faculty movement through the Promotion and Tenure (P&T) process. Faculty sufficiency and faculty effectiveness are closely connected and together support the overall quality of the program. When the program maintains an adequate number of qualified faculty, teaching loads, advising, and service expectations remain manageable, allowing faculty to devote appropriate time to course preparation, student engagement, feedback, and the assessment of learning outcomes.

The Valdosta State University MFT Program operates most effectively when staffed with four full-time, tenure-track, PhD-level, state-licensed, and AAMFT-approved supervisor credentialed faculty members. **For this reason, the program is actively advocating for an additional faculty line to maintain both faculty sufficiency and effectiveness.**

Faculty Effectiveness Chart					
Fall 2023					
Faculty Member	Annual AFARAP (Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory)	Tenure (Granted/Not Granted)	Associate Professor (Granted/Not Granted)	Full Professor (Granted/Not Granted)	Post Tenure (Granted/Not Granted)
Jennifer Lambert-Shute, PhD	2023 (Satisfactory)	granted 2007	granted 2007	granted 2012	not yet eligible, next action 2023
Martha Laughlin, PhD	2023 (Satisfactory)	granted 2004	granted 2004	granted 2010	2020
Hoa Nguyen, PhD	2023 (Satisfactory)	granted 2022	granted 2022	not yet eligible, next action 2027	not eligible
Adjunts (Hired Summer 2023)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Samira Garcia (Non-Tenure Track Instructor)	Resigned Summer 2023	NA	NA	NA	NA

WE WANT YOUR FEEDBACK!

OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATIONAL (OBE) and ASSESSMENT PLAN (AP)

As part of its commitment to continuous improvement and adherence to COAMFTE accreditation standards, the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Program conducts an annual systematic review to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of its outcome-based educational (OBE) and assessment plan (AP). This evaluative process is designed to determine whether substantial revisions are necessary in light of changes such as accreditation requirements, state regulations, core competencies, the program mission, or institutional structure—such as shifts in program delivery modality or college reorganization.

Following the 2023 annual faculty review, the Program has determined that no modifications to the existing OBE framework or AP are currently warranted. The current structure continues to align with COAMFTE's core competencies and effectively supports the program's mission and student learning outcomes.

We invite you to review the MFT Program's current OBE and AP. Feedback and recommendations are welcome and may be submitted via our contact us page, as we remain committed to maintaining excellence through transparency, responsiveness, and collaborative reflection.