Admissions Information for the School and Mental Health Counseling Programs

Many WWU Psychology Department faculty members are asked to write recommendation letters for the School or Mental Health Counseling programs. In case you have questions about advising or recommending your WWU students or alumni, we wanted to provide a bit of information and dispel some rumors.

What is the WWU Counseling Programs Admissions Process?
The School Counseling program typically receives 25-30 applications each year. We interview about 15 of the top candidates on campus in early March (if not possible, we conduct a conference call interview). The on-campus interview consists of a 30 minute sit-down interview with two faculty members and a 30 minute tour of the clinic/ informal interview with current students. We make immediate offers to 6 candidates and put 6 others on a ranked wait-list.

The Mental Health Counseling program receives approximately 50 applications each year. We interview the top 12-15 candidates on campus in early March (or by phone if necessary). Interviews consist of two 30-minute meetings with faculty members and one 30-minute meeting with a current graduate student. We offer admission to 6 applicants and rank other applicants on a wait list.

What types of people are admitted to the MH and SC programs?
Successful applicants to the SC program obtain an undergraduate degree in Psychology and have had 1 to 3 years of work experience in the schools (e.g. teaching, tutoring, Americorps, classroom aide) or in a related field (social work, case management, group homes for youth, outdoor education, substance abuse counseling, homeless support, foster youth mentoring etc…). The SC program does consider applicants who did not major in Psychology but the applicant would need to complete a core set of courses in the field and have experience working with children or youth (From the website: *The following specific coursework is required for those who do not have a degree in Psychology: introductory psychology, inferential statistics, psychology of learning, and child development.*)

Most of the successful applicants to the MHC program have an undergraduate degree in Psychology and all have some work or volunteer experience in a counseling-related setting (e.g. crisis hotline, residential treatment center, domestic violence shelter).

We receive fewer male applicants and a typical cohort group of twelve students (MH and SC combined) includes 3 or 4 men.

Do students fresh out of an undergraduate program have a chance?
The average age of the SC and MH applicants is about 25 years old. The average age of admitted students to the counseling programs is about 26 years old. That being said, for both
programs, contrary to popular opinion, we do admit some students directly out of an undergraduate program. These students have a strong record of volunteer or work experience and they tend to have mature personalities for their age.

The typical admitted cohort includes four “younger people” (ages 22-25) and two “older people” (ages 26-40) though this varies from year to year.

**How do the WWU Psychology graduates fare?**

We find that WWU Psychology applicants are very well prepared to tackle the academic demands of the WWU masters programs. We *highly* value the recommendation letters that you, our colleagues, write on the students’ behalf. In fact, if a WWU graduate does apply and they DO NOT include a letter from a professor in our department, this raises some questions.

Although there are rumors that WWU graduates have either an advantage or a disadvantage when applying to our program, these are only rumors. We make offers of admission to the strongest applicants whose career goals are consistent with the training provided by our program. In doing so, we accept some WWU graduates and turn down others.

Finally, students who are interested in counseling programs might be tempted to apply to BOTH the SC and the MH programs in the same year to increase their chances of admission. As it turns out, this is a disadvantage because we prefer that students know which program will suit them before they apply. The selection committees for the SC and MHC programs work closely together so we know if a student applies to both programs.

We hope this information is helpful!

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