

Chadron State College

Proposal to Add the Education Specialist Degree in Mental Health and Addictions

1. Descriptive Information

- A. Name of Institution: Chadron State College
- B. Name of Program: Counselor Education
- C. Degrees/credentials to be awarded graduates of the program: Education Specialist (Ed.S.)
- D. Other programs offered in this field by the institution: MAE Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC), MAE School Counseling (SC)
- E. CIP code: 51.1508 Mental Health Counseling/Counselor
- F. Administrative units for the program:
- G. Proposed delivery site(s) and type(s) of delivery, if applicable: Online
- H. Proposed date (term/year) the program will be initiated: Fall 2025
- I. Description of Program:

The online Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree in Mental Health and Addictions is designed to help individuals who have completed a Master's degree in School Counseling (or other related program by approval) obtain the necessary coursework and requirements for licensure as a Nebraska Licensed Mental Health Practitioner (LMHP). Nebraska has a growing need for licensed LMHPs and school counselor-trained mental health LMHP consultants. Additionally, the Ed.S. in Mental Health and Addictions will provide a needed pathway for School Counselors to become a licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor (LADC) in Nebraska. Graduates of the Ed.S. will have completed the coursework required in Nebraska to apply for an LADC license. Nebraska is experiencing a shortage of mental health professionals in all fields, including those licensed to work directly with clients seeking help with alcohol and drug use and abuse.

Offering this degree program at the Education Specialist (Ed.S.) degree level reflects the deliberate scaffolding of the program's curriculum, which builds upon the knowledge and skills already developed through completion of a Master's program in School Counseling. The Ed.S. will support School Counselors in gaining a deeper understanding of this mental health field while opening a door for valuable licensure, which could be used to provide access to licensed counseling both within PK-12 school districts as well as their overall communities. Many rural communities would greatly benefit from having individuals who hold both LMHP and LADC licenses and can serve their residents of all ages and varied needs.

CSC currently offers a Master of Arts in Education (MAE) program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, which includes the courses and experiences required to meet Nebraska's licensure requirements for serving as a Licensed Mental Health Practitioner (LMHP). However, any individual who has completed a graduate program in School Counseling, whether it be from CSC or other institution, would not be able to fully transfer in all of their prior coursework from that program. This results in the potential for an individual to have to retake some graduate coursework for which they have already completed as part of the School Counseling program.

In addition, the overlap of curriculum that currently exists between the CSC School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling graduate programs restricts a student who has completed a School Counseling degree from being admitted to the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. While they can complete coursework as a non-degree seeking student, they are ineligible for financial aid assistance, which is only available if they are completing a new degree.

This Ed.S. degree program alleviates these obstacles by ensuring that the required curriculum builds upon, rather than replicates, the knowledge and skills already developed through completion of the School Counseling Master's program. School Counselors can use their prior graduate program to meet the admission requirements for this program, which will then leave a total of 30 credit hours of new coursework to complete.

The Ed.S. program will be delivered via an online platform, which includes both synchronous and asynchronous virtual learning opportunities. This will allow for maximum opportunity to meet the needs of individuals across the state, particularly those who are place bound in rural communities and need access to a degree that works around their full-time commitment as a School Counselor. The required culminating internship can be completed through local placement options within their communities.

The curriculum: The 30-credit hour Education Specialist (Ed.S.) will include the following CSC courses which already exist and are offered as part of the Master of Art in Education (MAE) program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling:

- COUN 520 Psychopharmacology, Social and Medical Issues in Addictions (3hrs)
- COUN 523 Diagnoses and the DSM (3hrs)
- COUN 532 Treatment Issues in Addictions (3hrs)
- COUN 545 Essentials of Addiction Counseling & Case Management (3hrs)
- COUN 601 Practicum – CMHC (3hrs)
- Choose one:
 - COUN 629 Child and Adolescent Counseling (3hrs) or
 - COUN 630 Crisis Counseling (3hrs)
- COUN 631 Principles and Practices of Mental Health Counseling (3hrs)
- COUN 636 Couples and Family Counseling (3hrs)
- COUN 640 Internship in Counseling (6hrs)

Admission to the Ed.S. program will require that the student has already completed a Master's degree in School Counseling or another approved counseling or mental health related field.

2. Centrality to Role and Mission

The proposed Ed.S. program in Mental Health and Addictions is consistent with CSC's role and mission to deliver experiences that foster knowledgeable and engaged leaders and citizens to enrich the High Plains region and vision to focus on continuous improvement and excellence in teaching, applied scholarship, and service. The proposed Ed.S. program provides additional knowledge and skills to our School Counseling graduates and prepares them to serve as licensed LMHP and LADC counselors, opening doors to meet State needs for rural counseling providers.

The proposal also aligns with CCPE's Comprehensive State Plan for Postsecondary Education's goal to support Nebraska's postsecondary institutions to be "student-centered, create inclusive environments that foster student success, and offer lifelong learning opportunities that are responsive to students' and workforce needs." and to "be responsive to the workforce development and ongoing training needs of employers and industries to build and sustain a knowledgeable, trained, and skilled workforce in both rural and urban areas of the state." (pg. 9). The proposed Ed.S. program closely aligns with this CCPE goal to increase Nebraska's need for a rural and urban counseling workforce.

Finally, the NSCS Board Policy 4150, based up [Nebraska Revised Statute 85-951](#) authorizes a Specialist in Education at CSC to pave the path forward for this proposal. Statute language establishes "The colleges' fourth priority shall be the awarding of the specialist degree in education".

3. Evidence of Need and Demand

A. Need for the program:

In 2009, the Nebraska Legislature passed LB 603 to create the Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN) to provide support for the statewide shortage of behavioral health care workers. In 2022, the Nebraska Legislature recommitted its support of this initiative with the passing of LB1068, which developed the Behavioral Workforce Act and included a significant expansion of funding. According to BHECN, one in five Nebraskans has a mental health or substance use disorder. The Nebraska Behavioral Health workforce dashboard indicates that the Nebraska Panhandle has among the lowest representation of mental health (LMHP) and addiction (LADC) counseling professionals in the state. (Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska. *Nebraska Behavioral Health Workforce Dashboard*. (Accessed at <https://app1.unmc.edu/publichealth/bhecn/#/home> on 12/4/2023, 2:16:47 PM.)

Additionally, according to the Health Resources and Services Administration, "Nebraska has less than half of the behavioral health workforce needed to adequately meet the state's need, and 88 of Nebraska's 93 counties are mental health professional shortage areas. BHECN's latest workforce data also indicates that the workforce continues to age. This is most apparent among licensed drug and alcohol counselors, as more than half are older than 56. Additionally, urban areas continue to outpace rural regions in the supply of the behavioral health workforce." ([BHECN FY 2022-2023 Legislative Report](#).)

B. Demand for the Program:

The interest and demand for Chadron State College's Master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling is steadily growing, with increased numbers of individuals serving as School Counselors inquiring about coursework and/or programming focused upon this area. Over the past three years, CSC has documented a significant growth in interest, from eight (8) students in 2021 to thirty (30) students in 2023. However, these individuals have expressed the desire for a degree program option that builds upon the prior coursework and experiences included in their School Counseling Master's program.

This Ed.S. program will alleviate the existing restrictions that impact these individuals' ability to complete a second Master's degree at CSC to access the required courses and experiences for licensure. The Ed.S. program responds to this growing demand for a program that begins where the Master's program in School Counseling ends and strategically provides the coursework specific to moving these individuals forward in their career goals.

4. **Adequacy of Resources**

A. Faculty and Staff Resources:

No additional faculty or staff are required with the addition of this degree program, as there are available seats in the existing courses currently being offered for the MAE in Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. However, in case the interest and enrollment in this new program exceeds initial projections, the attached budget includes the costs of adding one section for each of the nine (9) courses required for this program, with five introduced in Year 1 and the remaining four courses introduced in Year 2. The instructional cost per course to add an additional section, using adjunct faculty, would be \$1000 per credit hour.

B. Physical Facilities:

The Ed.S. program will be housed entirely online. No additional physical facilities are required.

C. Instructional Equipment and Informational Resources:

No additional instructional equipment or informational resources are required.

D. Budget Projections for the first five years of program:

This Ed.S. program entirely utilizes existing courses, instructors, and resources, as the required nine (9) courses for the program have available seating to accommodate an additional five (5) students per year. However, as mentioned above, the budget expenses will include the costs associated with adding an additional section for each course required in the program, to fully reflect what the cost would be if additional sections were needed. This results in an additional instructional cost of \$15,000 for Year 1 (five courses), and \$30,000 for Years 2-5 (all nine courses). Beyond these instructional costs, no additional costs are incurred in the offering of the new program. Overall, total expenses for the program for the first five (5) years equate to **\$135,000** if additional sections of each course were added.

The Ed.S. program revenue is generated on the expectation for five (5) new students to enroll in the Ed.S. program each year and complete fifteen (15) credits each year, for a total of thirty (30) credits completed across a span of two years. At a cost of \$392 per graduate online credit hour, each student will generate total tuition revenue of \$5880. This results in total revenue of \$29,400 for Year 1 and total revenue of \$58,800 for Years 2-5. No other revenue is expected, as the fees are built into the online tuition costs. Overall revenues for the first five years of the program equate to **\$264,600**.

Overall, the net revenues for the first five (5) years of the program equate to **\$129,600**, with the addition of new sections to accommodate greater interest. However, please note that if no additional sections of courses are needed to accommodate new students, the net revenues for the program are **\$264,600**.

5. Avoidance of Unnecessary Duplication

Nebraska and the Midwestern Higher Education Compact do not have a similar program. A review of Nebraska Clinical Mental Health graduate programs failed to discover a degree pathway for CSC School Counselors to accrue the required Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Mental Health Practitioner licensure coursework, without seeking a 60-credit hour master’s degree program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC). These CMHC programs allow nine (9) to twelve (12) graduate credits of transfer coursework for students who have a School Counseling degree, which leaves prospective CMHC students frustrated with the lack of degree access for acquiring both a Nebraska Department of Education School Counseling endorsement and a DHHS licensure in Mental Health (LMHP).

NE CMHC Degree Options

School	Degree	Program	Prog Cr Hrs	Trans Cr Hrs	CACREP	Delivery	Notes
Bellevue Univ		CMHC	60	6	Y	Online	
CSC	MAE	CMHC	60	9	Pending	Online	
Doane Univ	MAC	CMHC	60	12	Y	On campus	
UNK	MSEd	CMHC	60	9	Y	Blended	
UNO	MS	CMHC	60	9	Y	Blend of on campus and online	
UNO	N/A	SC to CMHC	18	0	N	Blend of on campus and online	The Bridge Program* allows SC students to meet LMHP requirements.
WSC	MSEd	CMHC	60	9 non-CACREP 15 CACREP	Y	Blend of on campus and online	

*UNO’s Bridge Program is a non-degree-seeking, ineligible for financial aid, program for UNO students completing their 48-credit hour School Counseling master’s degree. It is similar to the CSC Counselor Education’s non-degree seeking plan of study designed to advise non-degree seeking school counseling graduates through LMHP licensure coursework.

Recently, a prospective student with a School Counseling MAE, expressed frustration she was refused the opportunity to enroll in the CSC MAE in CMHC. Her denial was based on the equivalency of her previous MAE from another institution to the MAE-CMHC. To achieve an LMHP in Nebraska, her only option was to seek a 60-credit hour CMHC Master's degree from another institution whose interpretation of the equivalency policy was less limited. Even then, the allowed number of transferable course credits resulted in significant duplication of credit hours. As demonstrated, the only Nebraska path to Mental Health Licensure by individuals holding a School Counseling Master's degree is through non-degree seeking status or completion of a 60-credit CHMC degree program requiring significant course replication at an institution other than CSC.

6. Consistency with the Comprehensive Statewide Plan for Postsecondary Education

The proposal aligns with CCPE's Comprehensive State Plan for Postsecondary Education's goal to support Nebraska's postsecondary institutions to be "student-centered, create inclusive environments that foster student success, and offer lifelong learning opportunities that are responsive to students' and workforce needs." and to "be responsive to the workforce development and ongoing training needs of employers and industries to build and sustain a knowledgeable, trained, and skilled workforce in both rural and urban areas of the state." (pg. 9).

TABLE 1: PROJECTED EXPENSES - NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

	FY 24-25 Year 1		FY 25-26 Year 2		FY 26-27 Year 3		FY 27-28 Year 4		FY 28-29 Year 5		Total	
	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost	FTE	Cost
Personnel												
Faculty ¹	1.25	\$15,000	2.5	\$30,000	2.5	\$30,000	2.5	\$30,000	2.5	\$30,000	2.5	\$135,000
Professional ²												
Graduate assistants												
Support staff												
Subtotal												\$135,000
Operating												
General Operating ³												
Equipment ⁴												
New or renovated space ⁵												
Library/ Information Resources ⁶												
Other ⁷												
Subtotal												
Total Expenses												\$135,000

¹ Adjunct faculty will be utilized to offer an additional section of each course being offered for the program, with five (5) additional sections offered in Year 1, and nine (9) additional sections offered in Years 2-5. The adjunct instructional costs per course are \$1000/credit, and 15 credits per year equates to \$15,000 in Year 1 and \$30,000 in Years 2-5.

TABLE 2: REVENUE SOURCES FOR PROJECTED EXPENSES - NEW INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM

	FY 24-25 Year 1	FY 25-26 Year 2	FY 26-27 Year 3	FY 27-28 Year 4	FY 28-29 Year 5	Total
Reallocation of Existing Funds ¹						
Required New Public Funds ²						
1. State Funds						
Tuition and Fees ³	\$29,400	\$58,800	\$58,800	\$58,800	\$58,800	\$264,600
Other Funding ⁴						
Total revenue for new program						\$264,600

³ Five (5) new students are estimated for this new Ed.S. program, with each student completing 15 credits of coursework each year and completing the program coursework in two (2) years. The online graduate tuition is \$392 per credit, so the revenue from each student will be \$5880 per year. During Year 1, five (5) students will be completing 15 credits of coursework, and in Years 2-5, ten (10) students will be completing 15 credits of coursework each year.