Strengths and Interests of USD MFT Program

Applicants to the USD MFT Programs usually have many options for graduate programs because they are strong students. The faculty view admissions as a matching process. We want you to know everything possible about our program as you make your choice. Here is some information about the strengths of our program and the clinical interests of our faculty.

**Interests of the MFT Program Faculty**

1. **Family-based Care** - In the MFT Program, students develop knowledge and understanding about the many ways that family relationships affect mental health and well-being, and how mental health and well-being affect family relationships. Students are taught how to work with individuals, dyads (couples), and families. Our curriculum, practicum sites, and supervision focus on working with couples and families. This has helped prepare our alumni for work in community mental health settings, medical settings and private practice.

2. **Integrated Behavioral Health** – The goal of integrated behavioral health is to integrate mental health services into the primary care setting. We have a strong relationship with UCSD School of Medicine and many of our students work in training clinics alongside physicians, nurses, and medical residents. Our program uses a biopsychosocial model as the lens to view families’ and patients’ issues. Currently, we have students working in UCSD Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Reproductive Medicine, and Psychiatry. We are the only MFT program in San Diego that has students working in these clinics.

3. **Culture, Diversity, and Global Mental Health** – Faculty have been involved in initiatives to work with refugees and immigrants in San Diego. In addition to our annual global trip with students, faculty are involved in training therapists and physicians in other countries such as Ecuador, Japan, Portugal, and Jordan. In addition, we have provided direct human services to immigrants and refugees.

4. **Training and Education** – The USD MFT Program has long been known for innovation in training. The MFT Program faculty have written numerous articles on curriculum development for therapists. Some of our journal writing has led to books that have been adopted by many other programs. For example, we wrote some of the first books on 1. Working in medical settings, 2. Coordinating care with a physician who prescribes psychotropic medications for shared patients, and 3. Evidence-based treatments. At present, the faculty is working on research projects that address how therapists develop a theoretical orientation and how case simulation can be used to train therapists. See below for more information on our books.
5. **Couples Therapy** – The faculty believe that couples are an important population that family therapists can serve. Dr. Williams has published numerous articles on treating couples, premarital counseling, and addressing religious differences among couples. Students in the program will be taught evidence-based approaches to couple therapy, as well as how to address special issues like infidelity and sex therapy.

6. **Interpersonal Neurobiology** – Faculty recognize the critical importance of parenting on children’s development including brain development and emotional health. Faculty are interested in how family interaction influences members’ capacity to handle stress. Resiliency and coping are discussed as ways to enhance brain development and to promote overall well-being.

**Graduates of the USD MFT Program**

Our alumni have kept in contact with our faculty and have shared with us where they are working post graduation. Below are a few employers that have hired a high number of alumni. Some of our alumni are in supervisory positions at these organizations. Some of the organizations include: Community Research Foundation, Mental Health Systems, Rady Children’s Hospital, San Diego Center for Children, San Diego Unified School District, San Diego Youth Services, Sharp Healthcare System, UCSD Healthcare-Eating Disorders Clinic, Collaborative Care, Internal and Family Medicine

**Doctoral Degree Pursuit**

For most of our students, their master’s degree is their terminal degree. However, students have the option of continuing their education by getting a doctoral degree. Most of our students receive funding for their doctoral education. Each year, several students who are interested in doctoral work have opportunities to publish or present with our faculty. We work closely with our students to help them find the right program and support them through the admissions process. Several of our graduates are now faculty themselves at universities in the United States.

“The USD faculty was instrumental in helping me choose to pursue my doctorate. Their dedication to teaching and training prepared me for success. Their unwavering support and encouragement combined with appropriate academic rigor and comprehensive clinical training made my transition to doctoral education incredibly smooth. I have felt prepared since day one in my PhD program. Each of the faculty took the time to meet with me individually, allowing me to ask all my questions about the PhD process. Each offered helpful insights regarding the application process, interviewing, and what to expect from doctoral work.” – Bryson Greaves, LMFT, PhD (c) Class of 2013

In recent years, our graduates have continued to Ph.D. programs at: Florida State University, Loma Linda University, Texas Tech, University of Georgia, University of Minnesota, West Virginia University, and Virginia Tech.
Award Opportunities
Our students have been successful in receiving the following academic awards:

1) HRSA TeamUP Project
The Department of Counseling & Marital and Family Therapy (CMFT) was awarded a HRSA grant, aimed to increase the number of behavioral health providers equipped to provide effective care to communities in need. The grant allows the Counseling and MFT programs to improve and expand innovative interprofessional training to meet the growing needs of vulnerable, rural, and underserved populations in Southern California, with a particular focus on Latino families. The project emphasizes training in multicultural/linguistic competence, integrated behavioral health, and evidence-based practice. **We are the only MFT program to receive this award within the state of California.**

All CMFT students have access to:
- Professional development opportunities: conference travel support, USD training series, Spanish language training
- Innovative specialty training: case simulation and integration of technologies
- Digital clinical resource library
- **A subset of 20 students per year will receive a $10,000 stipend** allocated during students’ clinical practicum year

**Stipend awards are distributed based on the following priorities:**
**First Priority:** Students providing behavioral health services in an integrated care setting. Current practicum sites include: *University of California San Diego (UCSD): Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Pediatrics, Reproductive Medicine.*

**Second Priority:** Students providing services in a language other than English to linguistically diverse populations. Current practicum sites that serve linguistically diverse populations: *Rady Children’s Hospital, San Diego Youth Services, High Tech High, UPAC.*

**Third Priority:** Students providing behavioral health services in a rural, medically underserved area, or to vulnerable populations. Current practicum sites: *St. Vincent De Paul Village, YMCA OZ, Kickstart.*

If you would like to learn more about the HRSA TeamUP project, please contact Lily Vistica, HRSA TeamUP Project Coordinator, at (619) 260-4600 ext. 4369, lilydancis@sandiego.edu.
2) AAMFT Minority Fellowship Program (MFP) $10,000-11,000
http://www.aamftfoundation.org/Foundation/What_We_Do/MFP/Application_Information/NITT_MFP-Y_Application_Information.aspx
This program provides financial support, mentoring, training and networking opportunities. The MFP objective is to reduce health disparities and improve behavioral health care outcomes for racially and ethnically diverse populations by increasing the number of culturally competent masters level behavioral health professionals.

3) CA Educational MFT Stipend Award Program $18,500
http://www.pgu.edu/california-state-stipend-application.html
The objective of the MFT Stipend Program is to promote public mental health as a career option for those entering the MFT profession.

Core Faculty Clinical Interest

Dr. Todd Edwards  Main clinical interests: Adolescents and their parents, men’s issues, and families coping with chronic illness. Experience in the following clinical settings: Community mental health, primary care (family medicine), and private practice.

Dr. Florencia Lebensohn-Chialvo  Main clinical interests: Family-based interventions for acute and chronic pediatric illness, Spanish-speaking populations. Experience in the following clinical settings: Primary Care (Family Medicine, Adolescent Medicine), Pediatric Inpatient Medical (Hematology/Oncology, Organ Transplant, Neurology, Pediatric ICU), Child/Adolescent Inpatient (SMI and Eating Disorders), Outpatient Child/Adolescent Psychiatry, Outpatient Family Therapy Clinic.

Dr. Jo Ellen Patternson  Main clinical interests: the impact of parenting on children's development, collaborative care, global mental health. Experience in the following clinical settings: Primary Care (Family Medicine), Mental Health Clinics outside the United States, Private Practice. Community Clinics.

Dr. Lee Williams  Main clinical interests: Couples therapy and premarital counseling. Experience in the following clinical settings: The VA (couples therapy); St. Vincent DePaul (homeless population); Escondido Youth Encounter (sexual abuse); Marriage and Family Counseling Center.
Books by MFT Faculty


Family Based Care


Collaborative Care


**Global Mental Health, Culture, and Diversity**


**Training**


**Couples**


**Interpersonal Neurobiology**
