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EXECUTIVE PROGRAM IN SCHOOL AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING (SMHC)
The Executive Program in School and Mental Health Counseling, M.S.Ed., is designed for working professionals interested in embarking on careers as school and/or mental health counselors. The program is organized around the following distinct emphases:

EMPHASIS I: SCHOOL COUNSELING CERTIFICATION
This emphasis is based on the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) National Model and takes a comprehensive approach to training school counselors. Penn GSE’s leadership in educational research, theoretical investigation, and practical training provides a resource-rich environment for future school counselors to absorb the profession’s most current fund of knowledge. Degree candidates are prepared to meet the most difficult challenges in serving students, schools, and communities. Students in this emphasis who complete all coursework and internship requirements as well as relevant state exams are eligible for certification as a professional school counselor in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and are well-positioned to earn similar certification in states across the country.

EMPHASIS II: MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING LICENSURE
This emphasis prepares students to focus on mental health counseling and earn licensure as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Graduates who complete coursework and internship training for this emphasis seek positions in mental health agencies, schools, residential treatment centers, and community agencies.

EMPHASIS III: JOINT SCHOOL AND MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING CERTIFICATION PLUS LICENSURE
The joint emphasis on school and mental health counseling is designed for students who want to work in a variety of settings in the role of school counselors with advanced mental health counselor training and skills, or as mental health counselors with an officially recognized school counseling specialization. Students completing requirements for this emphasis must complete internship training for school counseling certification plus professional counseling licensure. Completing the internship training in both areas requires either committing more training hours per week during the second year of the program or continuing on for an extra one or two semesters following the second academic year of the program.

Using an executive-learning format, students can earn their degree while maintaining full-time employment by attending courses that meet for one week of intensive study each summer and one weekend per month during two academic years. This model applies to all three areas of emphasis. Textbooks and meals during weekend and summer sessions are provided to students in the Executive Program in School and Mental Health Counseling and are included in the cost of tuition.

The M.S.Ed. degree for the Executive Program in School and Mental Health Counseling requires 20 courses. The cohort-model program results in students who work closely with their peers through a sequentially structured curriculum of courses and field training. The instructional methods include an inquiry-based approach, engaged scholarship, and problem-solving within context. Supervised field experiences are integral to the program. A two-semester field placement during each year in the program provides the opportunity for students to learn and practice counseling skills in a professional and supportive environment. Students select placements from our online site placement listing of high-quality training sites including mental health centers, schools, hospitals, and colleges. Students receive supervision both on-site and in a small seminar group format. In Year I, the practicum placement requires a total of 100 hours in the field, usually a site commitment of five hours weekly. In Year II, the internship placement can require from 300 to 600 hours in the field, based on the student’s choice of program emphasis. This commitment is usually 10-20 hours per week over the course of the year.

Students who are currently teachers or work in a mental health-related site and wish to use their place of employment for the field training must secure approval from both their employers and the counseling program placement coordinator.

STATE AND NATIONAL COUNSELOR LICENSURE
Toward the end of their second year in the program, students sit for the National Counselor Exam (NCE), which the program administers at PennGSE. Passing the exam grants students the status of both a state Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and a National Certified Counselor (NCC) once their 3,000 hours of post-master’s supervised counseling work is completed. The NCC credential signals to licensing boards and employers that the program from which the student has graduated has been approved by a national credentialing board.