



UGA Doctoral Program in Human Development and Family Science with Emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy

2023 Communities of Interest Newsletter



Colleagues & Friends of HDFS/MFT at UGA

It is my pleasure to write to you with updates and information about our COAMFTE accredited Doctoral Program in Marriage and Family Therapy. I will outline below some of the highlights of the 2022-23 academic year:

- Congratulations to five graduates for successfully completing their doctoral degrees, one graduate in 2021 and four graduates in 2022! All are employed in academic positions, postdoctoral fellowships, and community health agencies.
- We anticipate two more doctoral graduates in 2023!
- One of our doctoral students was awarded a Diversity Supplement with NIH's National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health to investigate the intersection of structural racism, trauma exposure, and chronic autoimmune disorders in minoritized communities.
- Another doctoral graduate was recently awarded the prestigious President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the University of Minnesota.

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- In January 2023, we interviewed an impressive group of applicants to the MFT program and look forward to a strong cohort in 2023.
- We obtained approval to search for an Assistant/Associate level MFT faculty to start Fall 2023.
- In Spring 2023, we launched our Spring guest lecturer series with impressive colleagues from around the country:
 - **Dr. Steve Harris**, Professor, Family Social Science, University of Minnesota. "When One Says "I'm Done," and the Other Says "Let's Try:" Discernment Counseling for Mixed-Agenda Couples."
 - **Dr. Mona Mittal**, Associate Professor, Family Science, University of Maryland. "Advancing Research and Practice to Address Interpersonal Violence, Mental Health, and Sexual and Reproductive Health."
 - **Dr. Ruben Parra Cardona**, Associate Professor, University of Texas at Austin. "Integrating Culture, Science, and Advocacy: Fifteen Years of Parenting Prevention Research."
 - **Dr. Lekie Dwanyen**, Assistant Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, Michigan State University. "Developing Needs Assessments to Explore Opportunities for Systemic Family-Level Interventions in Refugee and Post-Conflict Settings."
- This Spring, we are undergoing a COAMFTE re-accreditation site visit, and thank you in advance for your support if you are participating in that process.

- MFT doctoral students are providing advanced clinical services in a variety of systemic areas, specifically, Narrative Exposure Therapy for complex PTSD, ADHD treatment, couple therapy for first responders, and financial counseling are being offered to various underserved populations in the local area through their focused internships at the ASPIRE clinic.

As a valuable stakeholder in the success of our MFT program, I thank you for your ongoing support and engaged partnership.

Elizabeth Wieling

Elizabeth Wieling, PhD, LMFT
Professor and Director



Program Mission

The mission of the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Doctoral Program at the University of Georgia is to train scientist-practitioners to become innovative leaders in addressing contemporary challenges in global mental health. Faculty and students will engage in scholarship that advances ethical solutions to complex issues affecting diverse individuals, families, and communities using a systemic relational orientation. Scholars will demonstrate excellence in teaching, clinical research, and engagement focused on promoting a social justice agenda.

Announcements

In August 2022, we welcomed **Dr. Anisa Zvonkovic** [<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/anisa-zvonkovic>] as Dean of Family and Consumer Sciences at UGA.

In Fall 2022, we were very excited to welcome **Dr. April Few-Demo** [<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/april-few-demo>] as the Head of the Human Development and Family Science Department at UGA.

We are looking toward a bright future under their leadership!

If you have an interest or know of potential prospective MFT doctoral students, please reach out to **Dr. Elizabeth Wieling** to answer questions about the program [<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/elizabeth-wieling>]. Program information can be found at <https://www.fcs.uga.edu/hdfs/graduate-mft>.



ASPIRE LOBBY



THERAPY ROOM 1



THERAPY ROOM 2



THERAPY ROOM 3



ASPIRE CLINIC



Graduate Achievement Data

See our most recent [graduate achievement data](#)!

2023 Communities of Interest Survey

Thank you to all who completed the 2021 Communities of Interest Survey! We have taken your feedback seriously and have made some exciting changes to the program. We look forward to receiving your feedback on the 2023 survey!

We are proud to say that we have continued our diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts over the last two years. These have included bringing the UGA Pride Center to conduct a Safe Space training for all faculty, students, and staff so we can better support our LGBTQ+ students, staff, and clients. We also hosted an EOO training in Fall 2022 for MFT and HDFS faculty and students.

We have made a few changes to our curriculum

[https://www.fcs.uga.edu/docs/UGA_MFT_Policies_and_Procedures_Handbook_10.11.21.pdf] and to Outcome-Based Education Framework, which you can see on the next page of this newsletter.

Again, we are grateful for your feedback over the years and hope that you will support us again by completing this year's Communities of Interest Survey. Please reach out to LaFarrah Smith at lafarrah.smith@uga.edu with any questions or issues you might encounter.

Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes Matrix

UGA Mission Statement			
<p>The University of Georgia shares with the other research universities of the University System of Georgia the following core characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a statewide responsibility and commitment to excellence and academic achievements having national and international recognition; • a commitment to excellence in a teaching/learning environment dedicated to serving a diverse and well-prepared student body, to promoting high levels of student achievement, and to providing appropriate academic support services; • a commitment to excellence in research, scholarship, and creative endeavors that are focused on organized programs to create, maintain, and apply new knowledge and theories; that promote instructional quality and effectiveness; and that enhance institutionally relevant faculty qualifications; • a commitment to excellence in public service, economic development, and technical assistance activities designed to address the strategic needs of the state of Georgia along with a comprehensive offering of continuing education designed to meet the needs of Georgia's citizens in life-long learning and professional education; • a wide range of academic and professional programming at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels. 			
MFT Program Mission Statement			
<p>The mission of the Marriage and Family Therapy (MFT) Program at the University of Georgia is to train scientist-practitioners to become innovative leaders in addressing contemporary challenges in global mental health. Faculty and students will engage in scholarship that advances solutions to complex issues affecting diverse individuals, families and communities using a systemic relational orientation. Scholars will demonstrate excellence in teaching, clinical research and engagement focused on promoting a social justice agenda.</p>			
Program Outcomes			
Developing advanced culturally responsive and ethical clinical knowledge and skills in family therapy practice and supervision	Gaining multi-method research skills that focus on individuals, couples, and families	Building foundational pedagogical grounding and effective teaching skills	Becoming engaged in ecologically relevant translational science, prevention, and clinical intervention scholarship focused on social justice
Student Learning Outcomes			
<p>Student Learning Outcome 1.1: Students will gain advanced, culturally responsive, ethical and relationally oriented clinical practice skills throughout the program and demonstrate clinical competency.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 1.2: Students will demonstrate that they have gained skills as a relational and systemic supervisor in accordance with MFT principles and</p>	<p>Student Learning Outcome 2.1: Students will be prepared to conduct independent, rigorous ecologically relevant and relationally oriented systemic research with opportunities to address mental health across diverse populations.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 2.2: Students will be mentored to collaborate with peers and supervisors on</p>	<p>Student Learning Outcome 3.1: Students will be prepared to independently teach at the university level to a diverse group of students.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 3.2: Students will demonstrate ethical professionalism through their active involvement in professional organizations and be prepared to conduct professional training workshops and</p>	<p>Student Learning Outcome 4.1: Students will demonstrate engagement in systemic clinical research that addresses social change – individual, relational, community – across diverse populations.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 4.2: Students will demonstrate that they have gained advanced clinical knowledge and practice skills in an area related to the emotional and</p>

<p>are prepared to supervise MFTs in training.</p> <p>Student learning outcome 1.3: Students will demonstrate advanced knowledge of a clinical area and specialty in relationally oriented clinical work.</p>	<p>rigorous relationally oriented clinical research.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 2.3: Students will have demonstrated that they are prepared to conduct ethical research and apply collaboratively or independently for grants.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 2.4: Students will obtain training in multiple research methodologies for application in culturally-responsive clinical research with individuals, couples and families and demonstrate specific competency in either quantitative or qualitative methods.</p>	<p>consultations in community settings.</p>	<p>relational health of diverse or marginalized populations.</p> <p>Student Learning Outcome 4.3: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how to address issues of social justice pedagogically and professionally.</p>
<p>Faculty Outcomes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be engaged in research relevant to MFT – as evidenced by publications, presenting at national/international conferences, and securing external funding 2. Be clinically engaged and licensed as a Marriage and Family Therapist and an AAMFT Clinical Fellow and Approved Supervisor. Faculty must also meet state licensing and credentialing standards appropriate to their supervisory obligations. 3. Demonstrate effective teaching abilities with specific attention to addressing health disparities and promoting social justice; 4. Provide service in the department, university, field, and other interested and diverse communities. 5. Address diversity, equity and inclusion throughout their scholarship <p>Key: Clinical, teaching/outreach, research, diversity/social justice</p>			

Marriage and Family Therapy Core Faculty



Elizabeth Wieling

Professor and MFT Program Director

Ph.D. Human Development and Family Studies, Marriage and Family Therapy

Evidence-based treatments for families affected by traumatic stress

Parenting interventions/Child mental health

Immigrant and refugee mental health

Prevention, implementation, and dissemination science

Global mental health

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/elizabeth-wieling>



J. Maria Bermúdez

Associate Professor

Ph.D. Human Development and Family Science, Marriage and Family Therapy

Latino family resilience

Intersections of race, class, gender, and sexuality among Latinxs

Narrative family therapy

Feminist-informed therapy and research

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/maria-bermudez>



Jennifer L. Gonyea

Clinical Associate Professor

Ph.D. Child and Family Development, Marriage and Family Therapy

Family functioning & couple interactions

Strengthening couple relationships

Improving mental health and overall wellness

Training C/MFT service providers

Evaluation research on community-based intervention programs

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/jennifer-gonyea>



Jerry Gale

Professor Emeritus

Ph.D. Marriage and Family Therapy

Meditation as a relational practice for personal and social justice

Financial therapy

Interdisciplinary approaches to treating financial and relational stress

Attachment in families with adopted children

<https://www.fcs.uga.edu/people/bio/jerry-gale>