Tips for applying for admission to

TROY UNIVERSITY
MASTER OF SCIENCE.
COUNSELING & PSYCHOLOGY (C&P) PROGRAM

These suggestions were developed by members of the C&P faculty to help applicants create a successful admission package. The purpose of this document is to provide advice and guidelines on the expectations for:

- **Three specified reference forms/letters** that address the applicant’s potential for success in professional graduate studies and appropriate vocational goals relevant to the program..................................................................................................................Page 2
- **Resume** listing professional experience, certifications and other preparation ...........................................Page 4
- **Letter of Intent** demonstrating evidence of academic skills deemed essential by the program faculty ..................................................................................................................Page 5
- **Test Scores (MAT / GRE)** ..........................................................................................................................Page 7
- **Admissions Interview** conducted by members of the program faculty to assess topics deemed relevant by the program faculty regarding successful performance as a graduate student and as a counselor..........................................................Page 9

*Note: A complete application also includes official transcripts from all schools attended. To be considered official, transcripts must be mailed directly from the school to Troy rather than through the student.*
Suggestions for Reference Forms/Letters

A letter of reference (recommendation letter) is an important part of the application package and can be a key factor in the admission process. A strong reference letter can strengthen your application and if there are deficiencies in your application, it may help counterbalance them. For the Troy C&P admission process, three letters are required, in addition to the Graduate School Student Acknowledgement and Recommendation Form. The Graduate School Student Acknowledgment and Recommendation Form can be found at http://www.troy.edu/admissions/graduate/application-process.html and is completed fully online.

Consider the following in asking for reference letters:

- Choose someone who knows you well and can speak to your potential for success in graduate studies. Also keep in mind that they must be able to communicate your potential for forming effective interpersonal relationships, that you have appropriate vocational goals relevant to the program, and that they can speak to your personal and professional self-development.
- If you recently received your baccalaureate degree ask for a letter from one of your key professors, or your undergraduate adviser, department chair or dean.
- Ask someone with an advanced degree (doctorate or masters) if possible.
- Your current supervisor is a good choice as they can speak to your organizational, communication and leadership skills.
- Letters from family, friends and co-workers are discouraged.
- All letters must be on official letterhead, with an original signature form the person referring you.

You can help your letter writers write enlightening letters by giving each of them a portfolio that includes:

- The resume and letter of intent you will include in the admission packet so they may reference elements from them that are relevant to their relationship with you.
- What you would like emphasized in the letter.
- Information about our C&P Program so they have the opportunity to relate their knowledge of your intellect and talents to the requirements of the program.
- If appropriate, the recommended format for the letter provided below.
- The due date of the letter.
- It is recommended you open and close your request for a reference letter with thanks and an acknowledgement that the letter writer’s time is valuable and that this letter is important to your professional future.
Since writing a reference letter can easily consume one to two hours, many busy managers or professionals may appreciate a draft or a proposed final letter. Ask before providing. The following are some considerations should you be asked to prepare a draft:

- Write from his or her perspective or point of view.
- Follow the reference letter format outlined below.
- Address several personal dimensions. Obviously you want to emphasize your strengths, but be aware that too much attention to one or two aspects of your profile is often perceived as a lack of breadth in knowledge and/or skill.
- Be honest with yourself about your strengths and weaknesses. Don't attempt to overcompensate or rationalize weaknesses, instead accentuate the positive.
- Unless asked to do otherwise, only deliver a complete, polished version of the letter, one theoretically ready for signing. If the signer nevertheless wishes to add or delete something, accept his or her changes gracefully.

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***An example letter of reference is available upon request***

**Please ask your recruiter for more details.**
Guidance for Constructing the Resume

The resume is critical because it is used as a factor in determining your potential for success in the program. It should include educational and work history, personal and professional goals, professional affiliations, awards, articles, and references. Sometimes the name of your employer(s) may not indicate if it is a public, private, or nonprofit organization, so be sure you provide this information.

A very simple example is listed below. We do recommend you go into as much detail as is possible, in order for the faculty to get a better understanding of your work experience.

John B. Student  
300 East Oak Street, Pensacola, FL 32501  
850-437-2589  
jbstudent@email.com

EDUCATION  
University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL  
B.A. Psychology (May 2001)  
GPA 3.56  
Honors:  
• Dean of Student Affairs Scholastic Achievement Award  
• Phi Alpha Phi  
• Student Council President

EXPERIENCE  
Lakeview Center, Pensacola, FL  
Behavioral Health Services (Nov 2010 – Present)  
• Determine the need for basic social services required by clients in accordance with well-defined policies and procedures.  
• Develop and carry out individualized service plans.

Lakeview Center, Pensacola, FL  
Behavior Technician II (Jan. 2003 – 2010)  
• Provide information about available services and arrange for referral of clients to appropriate departmental or community human services resources.  
• Provide training and mentoring for seven social services workers.

CERTIFICATION  
Substance Abuse Certification (2013)
Guidance for Preparing the Letter of Intent

The letter of intent demonstrates evidence of academic skills deemed essential by the program faculty to include, but not limited to, written and oral communication, comprehension and critical analysis of professional literature, basic use of the library, Internet, and other information systems, and competence in statistics and relevant mathematics. We recommend the letter be a minimum of 350 words and maximum of 500.

Consider the mission of the Master of Science, Counseling & Psychology Program when constructing a letter of intent pertinent to admissions:

Troy University C&P Mission

The mission of the Department of Counseling and Psychology is to educate, develop and train counseling and psychology professionals by utilizing the highest external standards set by state and national licensing/certifying boards. Counselor education faculty design and deliver counseling programs through a variety of instructional modalities. The counseling degree programs provide graduate education at regional and state locations. The program seeks students from diverse populations.

Your essay should be organized into these major areas:

- **The introductory sentences or paragraph** should provide an overview of your letter. This is an important part of the letter as this paragraph becomes the framework for the rest of the letter. In this paragraph you will gain or lose the reader’s interest.

- **The first part of the letter** should list and discuss your professional goals as specifically as possible. These goals should relate to your interest in counseling & psychology. Some thoughts in preparing this discussion:
  
  - When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it (and about yourself) that has further stimulated your interest and reinforced your conviction that you are well suited to working in this field?
  - What are your five year professional goals?
  - What are your ten year professional goals?
  - What is your historical background for choosing these goals?
    - Family influences?
    - Work or volunteer experiences that influenced your choice?
  - How will this graduate program facilitate achieving these goals? (See the C&P Mission above.)
• **The second part of the letter** should address your readiness and potential for success in graduate studies. Some thoughts in preparing this discussion:

  • **Your readiness for graduate school** could include the following:
    - Your professional, volunteer or intern experiences that provided the foundation for understanding government or non-profit operations.
    - Progression in your current or past work environment (promotions, special recognition, etc.).
    - Your personal characteristics (for example, integrity, compassion, persistence) that improve your potential for success in the field of counseling & psychology.

  • **Your potential for success in graduate studies** could include the following:
    - Success in undergraduate studies, training programs, internships.
    - Discuss your time management skills.
    - Discuss your employer support and emphasis on graduate studies.
    - If appropriate, discuss family support.
    - Discuss skills (for example, leadership, communicative, analytical) which you possess and can utilize to succeed in the program.
    - Discuss any research you’ve been involved in or are interested in.
      - What were the outcomes?
      - What are the ramifications of the research?

• **Summarize your letter.** One consideration: You could use the summary to convince the Faculty Admissions Review Committee that you would be a stronger candidate for graduate school and more successful and effective in counseling & psychology than other applicants (using this strategy ensures that the essay provides evidence that supports this argument).

• **Proofread your letter.** Review your letter to eliminate grammatical or spelling errors, as these types of errors will hamper your admissions prospects since the program requires solid writing abilities.

Additional letter of intent resources include:

The Online Writing Laboratory (OWL) at Purdue University:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/642/01/

The Writing Center at Rensselaer:
http://www.ccp.rpi.edu/resources/careers-and-graduate-school/graduate-school-essays/
Tips Regarding the Admission Tests

As part of the admissions process students are required to take one of three entrance exams: the Graduate Records Exam (GRE) or the Miller Analogies Test (MAT). For unconditional admission, (that is, there are no pre-conditions to be met in your early performance in the program in order to remain) the following minimum scores are required: GRE 850 combined (old) or 290 combined (new), or MAT 385. Most prospective C&P students take the MAT rather than the GRE to capitalize on their verbal skills.

The test score is only one of several factors that will be considered by the C&P Faculty Admissions Review Committee admissions faculty members. A low test score will not automatically derail your chances for admission. All elements of the admissions packet are important in accessing your abilities to perform successfully in the program. High-potential students with low test scores are sometimes admitted on a conditional basis.

Miller Analogies Test (MAT): The Pensacola Support Center offers the MAT test at a cost of $70. To schedule the MAT call Donna Hinnant at 850-458-4725.

As the name implies, the MAT test is strictly about analogies, or things that are alike in one or more ways, often obliquely. It has a very simple format - you'll have 50 minutes to complete 100 partial analogies. The vast majority of them will be verbal, but there will be a few mathematical analogies on every test. To do well on the MAT, you'll need a good grasp of how words relate to and complement one another as well as a familiarity with the liberal arts - history, art, literature, philosophy, as well as math and science. There are many study guides available both on-line and in book stores. It is strongly recommended that you visit the MAT Home page at:


There are also MAT workbooks that you can obtain from your local library or bookstore.

Graduate Records Examination (GRE): The GRE is composed of Analytical Writing, Verbal Reasoning and Quantitative Reasoning sections, and takes approximately 3 hours to complete. The fee is $205 and the test is available at testing centers. To find the nearest location please see:

http://www.ets.org/gre/

The Analytical Writing section of the GRE General Test measures your ability to:

- Articulate complex ideas clearly and effectively.
- Examine claims and accompanying evidence.
- Support an argument with relevant reasons and examples.
- Sustain a well-focused, coherent discussion.
- Control the elements of standard written English (this factor plays a role only to the extent that poor writing skills impede readers' understanding of the argument).

The Verbal Reasoning section measures your ability to:
• analyze and evaluate written material and synthesize information obtained from it
• analyze relationships among component parts of sentences
• recognize relationships between words and concepts

The Quantitative Reasoning section of the GRE General Test measures your ability to:
• understand basic concepts of arithmetic, algebra, geometry and data analysis
• reason quantitatively
• solve problems in a quantitative setting

Test preparation courses are available online, such as https://www.ets.org/gre/revised_general/prepare
(and there is also a test study app).
Preparing for the Interview

Individual and/or group interviews are conducted by Faculty Admissions Review Committee to assess the following topics: appropriateness of academic history, work history, relationships in individual and group contexts, vocational goals and objectives and their relevance to the program, each applicant’s openness to self-examination, personal and professional self-development, and other factors deemed relevant by the program faculty regarding successful performance as a graduate student and as a perspective counselor.

The following are good, general guidelines for interviewing:

• Do your homework on the program you’re interviewing for so you can respond to and ask questions intelligently.
• Review your letter of intent before you have your interview -- it will help you respond to issues that may come up.
• Prepare like you would for a job interview and be ready to discuss your professional goals, areas of interest, and motivation for graduate study.
• Be prepared to answer questions in a way that demonstrates how you solve problems and articulate your ideas.
• Keep in mind that faculty are probably more interested in your character than how much you know.
• Ask questions that matter to you and give the faculty members insight into your personality and priorities.
• Don’t ask questions that can be answered in the school’s literature unless you need clarification.
• Be sure you are dressed properly. That means dressing as if you are going to a professional interview.
• Present yourself as positively as possible. Talk about your strengths, not your weaknesses.
• Relax!

Additional interviewing resources include:

Petersons:
https://www.petersons.com/graduate-schools/graduate-admission-tips-interview.aspx

USA Today College:
http://college.usatoday.com/2015/02/20/how-to-ace-your-grad-school-interview/
Closing Guidelines

These are just a few general tips offered by our C&P faculty to assist you in preparing your admission packet to the program.

We hope you find this guide helpful and that it allows you to effectively demonstrate your capability of successfully completing our C&P program and becoming a member of a select group of scholars dedicated to the advancement of the counseling & psychology profession.