

ANNUAL REPORT



Uniting Christian
Wisdom and
Mental Health

Summer
2024

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

FR. CHARLES SIKORSKY, LC, JD, JCL
DIVINE MERCY UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT



It is my pleasure to present Divine Mercy University's Annual Report! At their most recent meeting, the Catholic bishops of the United States turned their attention to the growing mental health crisis. Recent research examined has revealed a disquieting ascendancy of many mental health issues such as depression, suicide, and suicidal ideation. For example, 44% of teens report feeling persistent sadness and hopelessness. In the midst of this crisis, modern science and the mental health professions are not adequately addressing the problem. In many cases, the dominant secular worldview undervalues or is even hostile toward faith and the spiritual dimension of the person.

Nonetheless, close faith and values are important to clients in their therapy, and a growing body of research demonstrates the effectiveness of integrating faith and traditional values into treatment. Bp. Robert Barron pointed to the need for faith-based mental health providers at the bishops' meeting when he said: "I think that's a very healthy instinct to say, 'I've got a psychotherapist or psychiatrist who understands the spiritual life, understands its dimensions, understands how, finally, we're hungry for God,' That is super important; if we can train people in that tradition, all the better."

Divine Mercy University is training people in that tradition. Our mission is to bring together the best psychological science with a view of the human person shaped by the wisdom of the Church. We are forming an army of elite, Catholic mental health professionals serving all over the country, currently over 600; our goal is to put DMU alumni in every city, diocese, and university around the country. Having been consistently engaged in this specialized project for the past 25 years, DMU offers expertise in the field that is simply without rival. Just one testament to this reality is our recent production of a textbook-hailed as a work of seminal importance-that both honors and integrates the respective insights of philosophy, theology, and psychology on the question of the human person. Therefore, we are confident when we say, "we know what a human person is."

Theologian Dr. Deborah Savage highlighted our mission in a review of our textbook: "The authors radically resituate the person in his proper context as a composite creature who is a profound union of body and soul, and whose powers surpass and transcend the limits of the material world...it offers a comprehensive synthesis of centuries of wisdom on the meaning of the human person and his encounter with the world, as well as a profound analysis of the therapeutic significance of this vision of the person for the task of healing humanity. If properly recognized, [it] has the potential to address the most significant health crisis of our day."

This Annual Report highlights some of our impact from this past year. Thank you for being a part of the DMU community, and if this is your first encounter with us, please join us in helping us fill this critical need!

BISHOP BARRON ADDRESSES GROWING MENTAL HEALTH CRISIS



During the annual bishops' meeting in November 2023, Bishop Barron spoke extensively about the need for the Church to support those suffering from mental health challenges. The National Catholic Register covered the meeting and the following are some excerpts from the article:

"For the Catholic struggling with anxiety, depression or even thoughts of suicide, it is often daunting to think of how to seek help, given the stigma that can be attached to mental illness and the challenge of understanding these difficulties in light of faith. The U.S. bishops have seen and often very personally felt the need to improve their ministry to the growing number of the faithful facing these issues."

Bishop Barron said that they are now developing roundtables "for bishops to get together with mental-health professionals, with clinical people, with pastoral people, just to talk through the issues and to help us understand more clearly what's at stake and how we can respond."

Bishop Barron had concerns about "the disassociation between people and their families and friends and real life because the world is mediated now through screens," pointing to "a strict correlation between screen time and depression" found in many studies. "I think social media is a major contributing factor to this," he said. Bishop Barron also emphasized the isolation people face, saying that community is key to mental health because "we, as a species, just require companionship. We require friendship and relationship. If we lose that, we suffer, and the screen is a very poor substitute." He said the screen is "a first step or as a preliminary move" to finding community, but added that "if we rely almost exclusively on our mediated relationships through a screen, we're missing something that matters enormously for our psychological health. So reconnecting young people to their friends and family and to real people, that's a huge thing."

Bishop Barron told the Register he believes that mental-health issues and spiritual-health issues are "related to each other," agreeing with 20th-century analytical psychologist Carl Jung that, "at bottom, every psychological problem is a spiritual problem." He added that "there's a distinction to be drawn, to be sure, but yet they're related to each other; and I think there is a lot of spiritual desolation among young people. There is a spiritual alienation which has led to a lot of sadness." He said he does not believe the growing mental-health crisis is unconnected to the large number of young people leaving religion.

"I think people leave the Church — in great numbers, they abandon God; they abandon the liturgy; they abandon prayer," he said. "And then they wonder, 'Now, why am I so sad? Why am I so lonely? Why am I so isolated?' So, there's a link there, between spiritual health and mental health."

Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, said he thought there should be work to "raise up a lot of Catholic professionals because, sadly, the wrong therapist can create problems." He added that he believed one of the causes for the mental-health crisis is "the breakdown of family, and that's where a lot of healing can naturally happen, so I hope we're looking proactively on 'How can you strengthen family life?' because I think that can be a preventative."

Bishop Michael Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, told the Register that he didn't believe there's a family that is not affected "one way or another, either in their immediate families or distant families, where

someone is really struggling with mental-health issues." He said there aren't enough counselors in schools, and "our young people are really asking for help, for support, and dealing with anxiety and depression and isolation and despair." Bishop Burbidge said that "certainly in living our faith and growing close to Christ, we do find our peace in the midst of anxiety," but "God also gives us his instruments, and these are experts in the mental-health field. These are psychologists and psychiatrists and counselors. These are instruments of God through which he will heal people."

He praised the work of Divine Mercy University, which trains Catholic mental-health experts. "What is most effective is when the counseling, the guidance that is given, is also rooted with a faith perspective," he said, "with virtue and with the sanctity of life and the respect and dignity that belongs to every person as a child of God."

Bishop Earl Fernandes of Columbus, Ohio, told the Register that "a more cohesive and broader approach is clearly necessary in society, with all the challenges our young people, as well as families, are facing." He said the bishops' efforts will be "an interdisciplinary approach, relying on the mental-health professionals: doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists."

Bishop Fernandes said that if you look at "how seriously we took the pandemic, what about this? Because we're reaching pandemic levels of mental illness." While priests and bishops are not mental-health experts, he said that "we can be ministers, and we can refer people to the people who are experts, and we can accompany the families in other ways." That's because "Christ is the Divine Physician," he said. "He is the healer."

Scan this QR code to read the full article!



USCCB ROUNDTABLE ON MENTAL HEALTH

Recently, DMU's own faculty member and alumna Dr. Helena Orellana participated in a roundtable webinar led by Bishop Barron as part of the USCCB initiative for mental health awareness. The webinar has helpful insights about how the Church can help counter the mental health crisis, especially for young people. It also showcases the kind of graduates we are forming here at DMU - faith-filled professionals who know what a human person is, and are responding to one of the biggest challenges facing our culture.



Scan this QR code to watch the full webinar!

TRIBUTE TO

PHILIP SCROFANI, PH.D., ABPP



In May of 2024, Dr. Philip Scrofani, a longtime pillar of the DMU doctoral faculty, retired. During this time, we celebrated the career of a truly remarkable man. His career as a psychologist spanned over 50 years, with the final 20+ years serving DMU. Over the course of his long and distinguished career, he has made significant contributions to the field of psychology in general and to DMU in particular such as teaching and mentoring students, scholarship, administration, knowledge of accreditation, and masterful clinical expertise in diagnosis and psychotherapy.

Of special note is his advocacy and dedication for providing compassionate mental health care for the poor who suffer from chronic mental illness. In keeping with gospel principles, he was a champion of the disadvantaged during his time at St. Elizabeth's Hospital and has fostered within DMU students an augmented appreciation and recognition of the *imago Dei* in the souls of those suffering from severe mental illness.

DR. SCROFANI'S CONTRIBUTIONS

That he has left an indelible and constructive mark upon the fabric of DMU, through his teaching, supervision, and mentoring, is entirely unassailable. DMU students, among others, have been the beneficiaries of his extensive, 20 - year tenure where he effectively distilled his vast academic and clinical experience into his courses in Psychopathology, Advanced Adult Psychotherapy, Group Psychotherapy, and as a supervisor at the IPS clinic. Though not a formal, academic title, the faculty have often referred to him as our "Senior Clinician."

He has received two Faculty Awards for Outstanding Teaching from DMU, as well as four Teaching Awards for the Psychiatry Residency Program at St. Elizabeth's Hospital.

He has also made significant contributions both to the project of Catholic-Christian integration and within secular academia. He has authored and co-authored journal articles and book chapters in the areas of Catholic-Christian approaches to assessment, diagnosis, case conceptualization, individual psychotherapy, group psychotherapy, clinical training, and aging. He also contributed three chapters to the award-winning book *A Catholic-Christian Meta-Model: Implications for Psychology and Mental Health Practice*. More recently, Dr. Scrofani has been working on a Catholic-Christian modification of Interpersonal Psychotherapy. Although retiring from his teaching position, he aims to continue his research and writing on the application of the *Catholic-Christian Meta-Model of the Person* in clinical practice.

A Lifetime of Success

Dr. Scrofani was the third child of Italian immigrant parents with 4th grade educations. He grew up in inner-city Newark, NJ under many adverse conditions, but persevered and graduated with a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the Catholic University of America in 1972. After graduation, Dr. Scrofani worked for St. Elizabeth's Hospital (District of Columbia's Department of Behavioral Health (DBH)) where he became one of the first psychologists in the region to administer an inpatient unit in a hospital. From 1980-1989 he served as the Chief of the Clinical Therapies Training Branch where he oversaw 14 training programs,

including a large APA-accredited pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral residency program. From 1989-2001 he served as the Director of Psychology for the DBH where he was the administrative supervisor for over 90 licensed psychologists and interns who staffed 12 inpatient and outpatient sites located throughout the District of Columbia. He has served on the faculty of the Psychiatry Residency Training at the DBH from 2004 to the present. In 2019 he was inducted into the Hall of Fame at St. Elizabeth's Hospital Museum in honor of his 50+ years of service.

Upon joining The Institute for the Psychological Sciences (now Divine Mercy University) in 2004, Dr. Scrofani's many talents as a clinician, teacher, supervisor, and administrator had both an immediate and lasting impact on the IPS' new and developing Psy.D. degree program. He served as the Director of Clinical Training from 2004-2011 and as the Director/Co-Director of the Psy.D. program from 2012-2017. His knowledge and experience with accreditation bodies were instrumental in helping DMU/IPS obtain its status as an American Psychological Association accredited program.

This brief tribute could hardly do justice to the remarkable career and legacy of Dr. Scrofani, which is here merely adumbrated. As such, it necessarily omits much that is worthy of elaboration such as the innumerable and unheralded sacrifices he made for DMU, his exemplary example as a husband and father, and his deep, abiding faith in God as a pioneer in the project of integration. Beloved by colleagues, students, and clients, Dr. Scrofani leaves us all with so many rich and wonderful memories.

"Gentleman scholar, accomplished clinician, and holy man describe only a few of the qualities embodied by Dr. Scrofani. He has been a clinical professor at the Institute for the Psychological Sciences (IPS) and Divine Mercy University (DMU) for almost 20 years. He started his work at IPS in 2004. The impact of his presence has been vast because he has so generously served as a mentor for the faculty and students at DMU. His gift for writing is evidenced by his popular article, "The art of love: A Roman Catholic psychology of love" (2012). He is also a much appreciated speaker, whose depth of clinical experience and intellectual reflection gives him a wealth of examples to draw upon at will. Finally, I feel blessed to have worked with Phil conceptualizing and writing A Catholic Christian Meta-Model of the Person (2020)."

Dr. Craig Steven Titus



"Dr. Scrofani has been a treasure for DMU. His genius as a clinician and instructor have long been recognized by both students and faculty alike. Perhaps even greater than this, however, is his faithfulness to our mission and deep love for students and colleagues. These qualities have greatly contributed to the creation of unity and a sense of family among members of the DMU community."

Dr. William Nordling

Dr. Scrofani is a truly wise and experienced clinician who helped found the DMU psychology doctoral program. Along the way he founded Catholic Group Therapy. We were very lucky to have him. In his years of work in government settings he received many promotions and earned the respect of his secular colleagues. He is a remarkable person and colleague, and I feel very privileged to have worked with him closely over many years.

Dr. Paul C. Vitz



DMU has really been a realized dream for me. Long ago, years before it all got started, I began to notice that so many of my college friends, and especially my colleagues in psychology, were falling away from the Church as the culture became more challenging to the truth of our faith. I thought, who would our young people go to in times of trial? Who would my own children and grandchildren go to? I honestly prayed that God would send an answer. Well he did and I had the great privilege of being a part of the mission. That is why I guess I am so protective of it, perhaps at times to a fault. My time is ending now, save some things I might be called to write about. Please keep it all going. DMU is a source of great hope in these times.

Dr. Philip Scrofani



PROGRAMS

DOCTOR IN CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY (PSY.D.) ANNUAL REVIEW



Lisa Klewicki, MAT, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Psychology IPS Dean & Psy.D. Program Director



Diane R. Graves, Ph.D. Professor of Psychology Assistant Program Director



64

CURRENT DOCTORAL STUDENTS



100+

ALUMNI



100%

APA-ACCREDITED INTERNSHIP PLACEMENT IN THE PAST TWO YEARS














2023 DISSERTATION TITLES

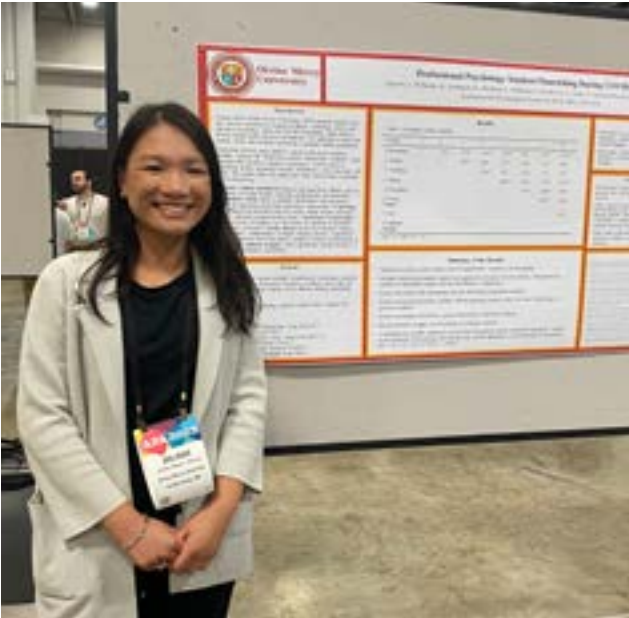
AUTHOR	DISSERTATION TITLE
ADAMITIS, GABRIELLE ROSE	A Catholic-Christian Understanding of Autism Spectrum Disorder and Grief Within the Funeral Setting
WILLIAMS, MELANIE L.	I will sing to the Lord as long as I live: Christian music as an effective coping mechanism for Catholic undergraduate students
OCRAN, FR. JOSEPH	Ghana, A Case Study: Psychological Constructs for Social Healing, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation
TURNER, JOEL STEPHEN	Object Representation in the Rorschach Inkblot Technique and its Relationship to Pornography Use: A Pilot Study
RICHARDSON, SR., PATRICK S.	Attachment to God in PTSD Treatment of Older Adults
LEE, SEUNG YOON (CHRISTINA)	Towards Trauma-Informed Pastoral Care (TIPC): Development of the Model and Workshop
LOHMANN, III, VICTOR F.	The Impact of Pornography Use on Generalized Habit Formation
MCGLYNN, MAURA M.	Awe's Impact on Attitudes of Connectedness and Respect
WHITE, TIMOTHY W.	Communication and Conflict Management in Relationship Enhancement Therapy: A Critique Using Contemporary Psychological Science and the Catholic-Christian Meta-Model of the Person

CELEBRATING OUR FACULTY AND STUDENT PRESENTERS AT THE APA 23 CONFERENCE

The APA National Convention was held in Washington, DC in August 2023. DMU had 12 students and faculty participating in a variety of ways including symposia and formal presentations, as well as poster presentations. This is the highest number of DMU participants at a National Convention of the American Psychological Association!

The following are a few featured DMU presentations from the National Convention:

-  Presentation: Attachment to God in Patients Living with Incurable Cancer (Spiritual Struggle and Mental Health, Division 36, Poster Session I)
Presenters: Cheri Marmarosh, Ph.D., Daniel Vo, M.Psy., Mary Anjali Abraham, M.Psy., Aryan Rajput, High School RA at DMU Lab
-  Presentation: The Role of Family Caregiver as a Vocation: Protective and Risk Factors of Prolonged Grief Disorder, Session Chair: Rebecca Morse, Ph.D.,
-  Presentations on Prolonged Grief Disorder: Clinical Applications for Family Caregivers, Vocational Fulfillment Through Family Caregiving, Dual Vocations of Family Caregivers
-  Individual panel presentations by Christina Zampitella, Psy.D., FT, Center for Grief Therapy; Jeanne Piette, Ph.D., Divine Mercy University, and Lory B. Easton, JD, M.Psy.
-  Presentation: Vocation, Identity, and Non Death Grief: Meaning Making During Professional Transitions (Division 20 Poster, Session I)
Presenter: Rebecca S. Morse, Ph.D., Janet McCord, Ph.D., FT, Lory B. Easton, JD, M.Psy., Malcolm Anderson, M.Psy.
-  Presentation: Group Member Attachment and Online Group Therapy (Division 49, Poster Session II)
Presenters: Dylan Feng M.S., GWU, Alicia Solerno, M.S., GWU, Cheri Marmarosh, Ph.D.
-  Presentation: The Group Dynamics of Hate: From Group Leadership to Outgroup Derogation (E24)
Presenters: Cheri Marmarosh, Ph.D.
-  Understanding the Client in Front of You: A Catholic-Christian Meta-Model of the Person (part 1)
Understanding the Client in Front of You: A Catholic-Christian Meta-Model of the Person (part 2)
-  A Student's View of the CCMMP: Training in Science Through the Lens of Faith
-  Presentation: When Science and a Faith Perspective Converge: Introducing a Bio-Psycho-Social-Spiritual Meta-Model, Session Chair: Diane Graves, Ph.D.
-  Individual panel presentations by Stephen Grundman, Ph.D., Helena Orellana, Psy.D., Melanie Williams, M.Psy., and Mary Anjali Abraham, M.Psy.
-  Presentation: Addressing the National Mental Health Supply and Demand Crisis: A Proposed Group Therapy Solution (Division 49 CEU)
Presenters: Cheri Marmarosh, Ph.D., Martyn Whittingham, Ph.D. Private Practice
-  Presentation: Relational Development and Social Justice in Psychodynamic Psychotherapy (Division 39 CEU)
Presenters: Cheri Marmarosh, Ph.D.
Presentation: Online Supervision During COVID-19: The Supervisor's Perspective
Presenters: Miral Malik M.S. GWU, Sarah Hedlund, Ph.D. GWU, Stacey Dershewitz, Psy.D., JD, GWU, Paul Gedo, Ph.D., GWU, Katherine Marshall-Woods, Psy.D., GWU, Cheri Marmarosh, Ph.D.



GROWTH OF THE IPS CENTER FOR PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES

The IPS Center for Psychological Services provides opportunities for the Psy.D. program students to begin their applied clinical training while working with clients from the surrounding communities. Students are trained to provide in-person and telehealth mental health services in the Commonwealth of Virginia. They are closely supervised by licensed clinical psychology faculty members who support the application of integration with their clinical case conceptualization and treatment planning.

Inquiries for services at the IPS Center increased by 44% in 2023, necessitating the hiring of an

Intake Coordinator and an additional Full-Time Licensed Clinician to cover the growing need for mental health services from a Catholic-Christian perspective.

IPS Center clinicians and students have provided over twelve presentations to a variety of church and community groups, bringing mental health services founded in an integrative perspective out to the surrounding community. Such initiatives have succeeded in bringing the message of psychological integration to a broader audience.

MASTER'S IN COUNSELING ANNUAL REVIEW



Fredericka Vvlecka, PhD, LPC-S
Program Director



Jessie Tappel, LPC, ACS
Associate Program Director

MASTER'S IN COUNSELING PROGRAM CELEBRATES CACREP ACCREDITATION



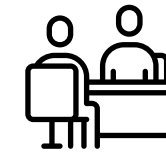
The M.S. in Counseling program was granted CACREP Accreditation approval this past August, following an extensive program review that began in 2019. To be sure, it was the tireless work of many that brought about this significant accomplishment which doubtlessly bodes well for the future of our counseling program.

With CACREP accreditation through 2031, this means that DMU counseling alumni may be licensed in all 50 states (as well as Washington, D.C.) This newly earned accreditation will likely be of enormous consequence in broadening DMU's healing influence upon the culture at large.

“This is a major milestone for the online program and reinforces DMU’s position as a leader in online education.”

Fr. Charles Sikorsky

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



88

STUDENTS IN CLINICAL INTERNSHIPS



10

FULL-TIME CORE FACULTY



280

STUDENTS IN THE SCHOOL OF COUNSELING



40

NEW STUDENTS STARTED IN THE FALL OF 2023



100%

OF THE STUDENTS ACHIEVED “MEETS EXPECTATIONS” AT THE END OF THE FINAL INTERNSHIP

FACULTY HIGHLIGHTS

Dr. Gabriel Dy-Liacco continued to present workshops on understanding victims and survivors on sexual abuse by clergy and safeguarding concerns in Rome, Italy and Laguna, Philippines.

Dr. Mark Gerig presented on the role of intellectual virtues in the practice of professional counseling at the Christian Association for Psychological Studies Annual Conference.

Dr. Mallory Wines delivered her paper on “Counseling Clients in Poverty: Adopting a Social Justice Framework for Conceptualization” at the Pennsylvania Counseling Association Conference.

Dr. Kathie Erwin returned to the University of Iceland as a Fulbright Specialist for education and training related to group work for older adults.

Dr. Matthew McWhorter was published in the *Cultural & Psychology Journal* with an article titled “Hwang’s Philosophy for Developing an Indigenous Cultural Psychology.”

Dr. Craig Titus published articles in 2023, including “Strengthening the clinician’s self-care and resilience based on the *Catholic-Christian Meta-Model of the Person*” in *Integratus: The Journal of the Catholic Psychotherapy Association*.



Scan QR code to watch full episode

MASTER'S IN PSYCHOLOGY ANNUAL REVIEW

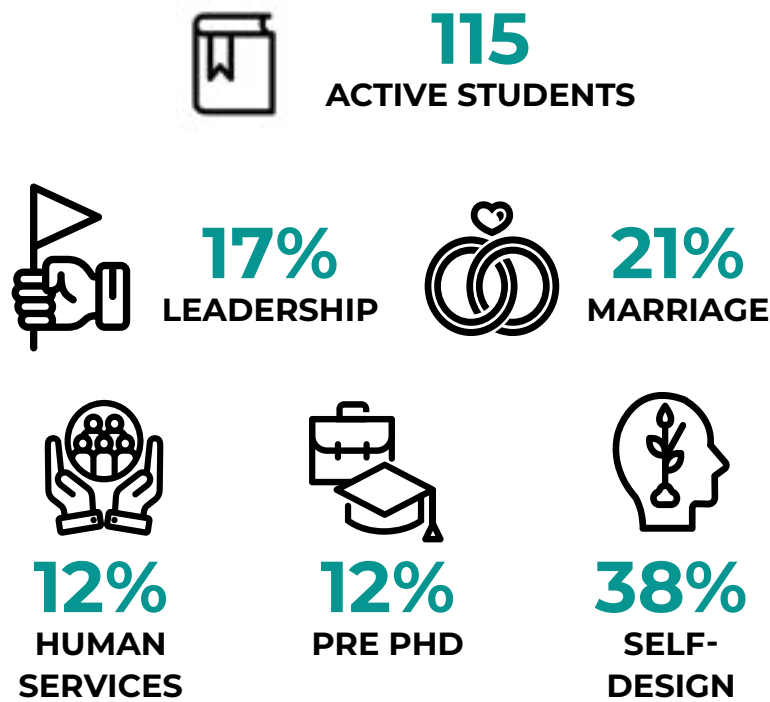
The MSP added their first cohort of the prePhD concentration. These students engage in real world research projects by formulating pressing questions, collecting and analyzing data, and presenting their research findings at conferences and in academic journals.



Julia Klausli, PhD, MA, LPC
Program Director



PROGRAM CONCENTRATIONS



In addition to the new concentration in pre-PhD studies, DMU now offers a post-graduate certificate in Bioethics for MSP students. Especially helpful for healthcare professionals, among others, the Bioethics concentration is intended to help individuals gain a deeper understanding of the human person, develop the ability to discern ethically challenging situations, and learn to relate empathically to individuals beset by difficult medical conditions. The 9 elective credits are taken through the National Catholic Bioethics Center.



Catholic Psychotherapy Association Announces Inaugural Winners of the Editors' Choice Award: Dr. Christopher Gross and Dr. Julia Klausli for their article on "Natural Family Planning for Catholic Couples: Relationship Functioning, Prevalence, and Predictors of Use".

Read More:



SCHOLARLY DEVELOPMENTS

- “Church Hurt”: Defining a Colloquialism and Exploring its Role in Predicting Religious Disaffiliation by Aleksandra Ambroziak.
- Predictors of Purpose for Young Adults: The Role of Religiosity, Boredom, and Smartphone Use by Christine Bailey.
- Leadership Virtue Interventions for Increasing Employee Engagement through the Development of Psychological Safety by Erich Boileau.
- Dr. Treptow presented in Dublin, Ireland at the Infant Mental Health Conference “When Birth Diagnosis Interacts with the Sandbox; How can professionals offer hopeful narratives”.
- Dr. Treptow and Dr. Klausli spoke on Radio Maria, Dublin, Ireland about the MSP and Divine Mercy University.
- A Shared Experience: Achieving Flourishing with the Support of Peers by Whitley Cates.
- The Shepherd Program: Discipleship For The Whole Family During Sacrament Preparation: Implementation Plan by Charisse Magsipok.
- A Sex Trafficking Awareness Seminar for Catholic High School Educators by Sr. Marie Morgan, OSF.
- A Guided Program for Teenage Girls to Strengthen their Identity to Reduce Anxiety by Fabiola Zellek Bonilla.
- Practicing Empathy for Personal Connection: Implementation Plan by Abby Brumley.
- Called to Love Again by the Divorce Ministry Support Group.



Listen to Edith Whyte, (MSP, 2019) and Dr. Julia Klausli discuss their interest in DMU programs across Ireland:



SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CERTIFICATE ANNUAL REVIEW

- 2023 was a year of consolidation and updating for the Spiritual Direction Certificate Program as it celebrated its 5th birthday in January 2024. We launched SDC 700 and SDC 701 practicum courses to accompany students as they fulfill their practicum requirements. In fall 2023, we updated all SDC courses to keep the content current, while also streamlining their delivery.
- Made possible by the philanthropic generosity of donors, the SDC Grant fund was established in December 2022 which has allowed those of lesser means to receive the outstanding training we offer in spiritual direction at DMU.
- We continue to grow our faculty through training. There are a total of 20 faculty members who are involved in the program as instructors and facilitators. 90% of our faculty members have been with the program for 2+ years.
- The presence of DMU SDC alumni have become increasingly prevalent in parishes across the country where they function as dynamic catalysts of spiritual growth. We currently have a list of over 90 alumni available as spiritual directors in the DMU online alumni directory.



Maria Brackett
Program Director
Spiritual Direction Certificate

POPE BENEDICT XVI ON SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

“As she has never failed to do, again today the Church continues to recommend the practice of spiritual direction, not only to all those who wish to follow the Lord closely, but to every Christian who wishes to live responsibly his baptism, that is, the new life in Christ. Everyone, in fact, and in a particular way all those who have received the divine call to a closer following, needs to be supported personally by a sure guide in doctrine and expert in the things of God.”



–Pope Benedict’s address
to the Teresianum on
May 19, 2011.

PROGRAM STATS



150
ALUMNI



6
RESIDENCY
PROGRAMS IN 2023



75
STUDENTS
TRAINED

Currently our student population consists of:



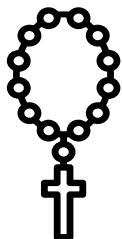
68%
LAY MEN AND
WOMEN



9%
PRIESTS



12%
RELIGIOUS SISTERS
AND BROTHERS



11%
PERMANENT
CATHOLIC
DEACONS



WHAT IS SPIRITUAL DIRECTION?

Listen to our interview with ‘Trending with Timmerie’ on Relevant Radio here:



FACULTY AND STUDENT HIGHLIGHTS

Shereen Yusuff

A current student who came to Christianity after a long journey. She tells her story of conversion on a recent podcast broaching the question, “Why do we need religion?”

Listen to the
podcast here:



Deacon Scott Gilfillan

An SDC alumnus who directs the Catholic Conference Center, a retreat center in North Carolina.

Marie Mozzi

An SDC student who published, “The Joy of Servant Motherhood” while studying for her certificate in Spiritual Direction with us. In her essay, she argues that when we learn to serve, we truly live well.



SPIRITUAL DIRECTION CERTIFICATE GRANT FUND

Without the help of those able to give of their surplus, many will not be able to afford this education and, consequently, many others will not receive the fitting spiritual counsel they so desperately need. Your generous gift would prevent this and have far-reaching consequences toward the salvation of souls; the future of many weighs in the balance.

Please help us by making a secure gift via this QR code, and choose the Spiritual

Direction Grant Fund as your donation option. When you make a gift, Fr. Charles and I will remember you and your intentions in a special Christmas Mass as a sign of our gratitude.

How can we pray for you? Be sure to email me your intentions when you make your donation at mbrackett@divinemeracy.edu.



ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Michele Drennen
Alumni Association Director



The DMU Alumni Directory continues to grow.

The online directory allows those seeking teachers, life coaching, a priest, counselor, spiritual director, or fellow alumni to search by name or state to find the resources they are looking for.

Scan this QR code to check out the directory!



ALUMNI GATHERINGS



- The longstanding effort to unite alumni and current students at events for networking purposes has continued to yield much success! In April 2023 an event hosted by Fr. John Hopkins of the Divine Mercy Clinic in California was well attended by DMU alumni and friends.
- Dr. Andrew Sodergren's Ruah Woods annual event in Cincinnati, OH again offered alumni and students from Kentucky and Ohio the opportunity to mingle and connect this past September.
- In November, The John Paul II Foundation, along with the Diocese of Oklahoma, held a "Together in Holiness Conference Series" which included "A Catholic Marriage Enrichment Conference." It was well attended by DMU alumni.

2024 growth plans for the alumni association include working on a mentoring program, continuing to feature graduate success stories in each alumni newsletter, and exploring the possibility of establishing a speakers bureau.



ALUMNI PROFILE

Susie Maurer, Director of Mental Health and Suitability for FOCUS, MSP 2017

I grew up in Fairfax, Virginia in a large Catholic homeschool family. I attended George Mason University where I majored in Communication with a concentration in Interpersonal and Organizational Communication. After college I joined FOCUS—the Fellowship of Catholic University Students – a Catholic apostolate whose mission is to share the hope and joy of the Gospel. FOCUS missionaries encounter people in friendship, inviting them into a personal relationship with Christ and accompanying them as they pursue lives of virtue and excellence. As a missionary, I served college students at the University of Mary Washington, James Madison University, and MIT before taking a leadership role at FOCUS' headquarters in Denver, CO.

I first heard about DMU through a FOCUS connection. When I was a student at Mason, one of my FOCUS missionaries was a student at DMU (then IPS). When I joined FOCUS in 2012, I deferred on several master's programs to serve as a missionary. I thought after two years of mission, I would get a graduate degree. The Lord had other plans in mind, I have now been with FOCUS for 10 years and ended up passing on my deferrals.

However, the Lord cannot be outdone in generosity, and in my third year as a missionary, I learned about a scholarship opportunity to get my M.S. in Psychology from DMU. I was awarded a generous scholarship from FOCUS and DMU and decided to pursue the MSP after speaking to one of the admissions counselors. My main questions about the MSP were in regard to how it differed from a clinical degree. I will never forget what I was told, and I carry



the sentiments that were shared with me in that call with me to this day, "the MSP is the exact opposite of clinical psychology. In traditional clinical roles you wait for people to come to psychology, with the MSP you take psychology out from behind closed doors to where the people are." As a missionary working with college students at the time, this rang incredibly true. Those in the helping professions need to be equipped with tools of psychology to run offense and triage for those practicing clinical psychology. Providing people

with understanding and tools before they are in a crisis or clinical situation can help them be more resilient if difficult situations arise or even help them avoid a crisis altogether. DMU's integrated approach to the human person as communicated in the meta-model fits hand in hand with our training as FOCUS missionaries.

Teaching students to pray with Scripture, live lives of virtue, and have a relationship with Christ often coincides with them discovering their own wounds and weaknesses. You cannot grow spiritually without also growing intellectually and emotionally.

To any MSP student starting out, I would recommend frequently communicating and collaborating with your professors. DMU lives up to its name...Mercy! When I had a medical emergency during my studies, my professors were fabulous to work with. They were incredibly understanding and provided me with the flexibility I needed at that time. Additionally, communicating with the professors will allow you to get to learn things that are outside of the course materials. The professors are brilliant individuals who love the Lord and psychology and they have more to teach you than just the class readings. They want you to succeed; if you are ever struggling, just talk to them. I really enjoyed working with Dr. Anna Pecoraro as my Capstone advisor. She was the first one to point me towards studying boundaries in my research on burnout. I have also developed and written training on mental health first aid, how to know when to seek counseling, and how to refer others to therapy.

"My greatest accomplishment since DMU graduation has been turning my Capstone Project into real-life training for FOCUS Missionaries. I did my Capstone on "burnout in ministry" and now every year I get to train missionaries about burnout, self-care, and other proactive mental health strategies. What started as a DMU project now influences nearly 1,000 every year."

"Susie was recently promoted to Director of Mental Health and Suitability. Susie's previous role was Sr. Director of the HR Team. Susie is a senior leader in FOCUS' HR organization. She was a missionary and Team Director, and then moved to Denver to serve with the HR Team. She has a master's degree from Divine Mercy University and is FOCUS' top expert on mental-health and staff suitability. During her time in HR, she has experienced pretty much everything you can think of with staff — and she's the first person I call whenever I need advice for FOCUS or another client. Susie also has played a huge role in building the FOCUS missionary selection process, and she's also an all-around great person."

Joe Hensler, CEO, Hensler Consulting



<https://focus.org/>

To learn more about the FOCUS mission in forming Catholic missionaries rooted in Church teaching, prayer, Scripture and evangelization, scan to learn more:



DMU GLOBAL MAP



2023
Alumni

910 alumni as of 2023



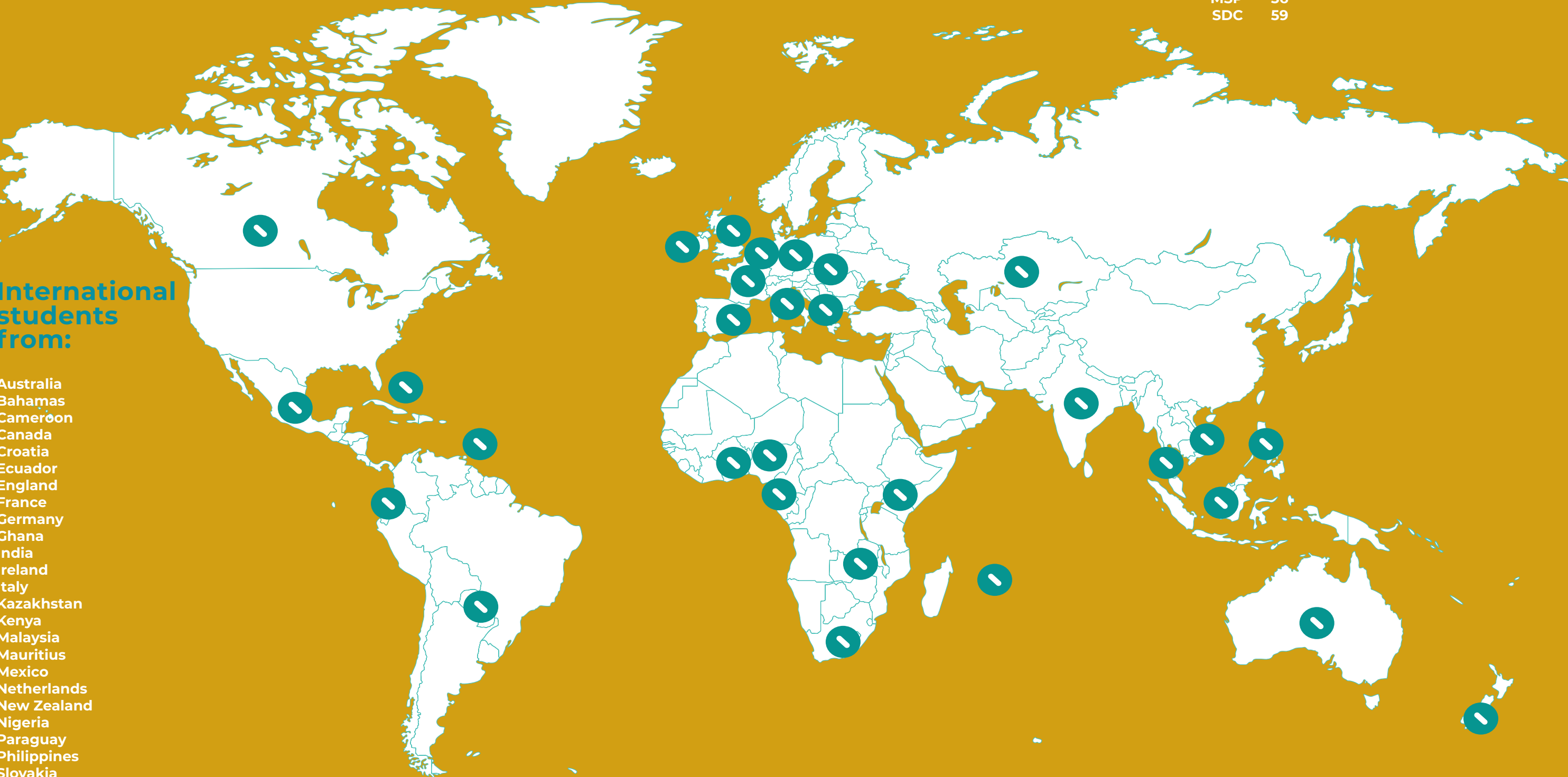
152 Degrees
Awarded in 2023

Psy.D.	4
M.Psy.	7
MSC	46
MSP	36
SDC	59



Current
Enrollment

MSC	331
MSP	147
Psy.D.	71
SDC	176



International students from:

- Australia
- Bahamas
- Cameroon
- Canada
- Croatia
- Ecuador
- England
- France
- Germany
- Ghana
- India
- Ireland
- Italy
- Kazakhstan
- Kenya
- Malaysia
- Mauritius
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- Paraguay
- Philippines
- Slovakia
- South Africa
- Spain
- Thailand
- Trinidad & Tobago
- Vietnam
- Zambia

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

DMU & University of Navarra Agreement DRS. HOLLMAN AND RODRIGUEZ-GONZÁLEZ ADVANCE DMU RESEARCH

In collaboration with Dr. Martiño Rodríguez-González of the University of Navarra in Spain, Drs. Hollman and Marmarosh have been the recipients of a prestigious research grant from the Templeton Foundation.

This memorandum of understanding signed between the University of Navarra and DMU will allow for future collaboration between these respective institutions including:

- Faculty visits or exchanges.
- Student collaborations.
- Joint research, publication, conference presentation, and grant proposal submission.
- Advancing the field of family and couples therapy together.
- International dissemination of DMU's *Meta-Model of the Person*.

"DMU is a leading institution in the USA and the Catholic world with regard to the integration of an encompassing view of the person in the field of psychology and mental health. The University of Navarra has a long tradition in training and research in several disciplines, such as psychology, education, medicine, theology and philosophy. I think this collaboration will be beneficial for both institutions as we work together towards the common goal of integration in the truest sense" --Dr. Rodríguez-González

Dr. Martiño Rodríguez-González is Associate Researcher at the Institute for Culture and Society (ICS), Assistant Professor at the Universidad de Navarra (Spain), an accredited marriage and family therapist in Spain, and President of the Spanish Society for Development and Research in Family Therapy (2019-2024). He holds bachelor and doctoral degrees in psychology from Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, and a master's degree from the John Paul II Institute in Madrid, Spain.



DR. MARTIÑO RODRIGUEZ-GONZÁLEZ
UNIVERSITY OF NAVARRA, SPAIN



DMU HOSTS INTERNATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SYMPOSIUM

In June 2023, Divine Mercy University hosted an international psychology symposium.

Fifteen universities from the International Network of Regnum Christi Universities participated. Several other universities also participated such as Anahuac Universities from Mexico, Finnis Terrae from Chile, Francisco de Vitoria from Madrid, and the European University of Rome.

Two major goals of the symposium were strategic planning and collaboration among the universities in research and education in the field of psychology.

A third goal was to introduce participants in an in-depth way to the *Catholic Christian Meta-Model of the Person (CCMMP)*.

At the close of the symposium, diplomas were awarded to the psychologists from the different universities who had previously completed a course on the CCMMP and its implications for psychology, taught by Fr. Walter Schu, LC, with the help of Gerardo Hernández Márquez, head of the psychology department of the Anahuac in Xalapa. The symposium was directed by Fr. Jesus Villagrasa, LC, in his role of overseeing research in the network of Regnum Christi Universities as General Counselor, and by Fr. Charles Sikorsky, LC, President of DMU.



DMU AND THE CATHOLIC PSYCHOTHERAPY ASSOCIATION

In August of 2023, Fr. Walter Schu, LC, S.Th.D., a professor in the counseling program at Divine Mercy University, was named chaplain of The Catholic Psychotherapy Association.



Founded in 2002, the CPA is an interdisciplinary group of clinical, academic, student, clergy, religious, and affiliate members from around the world, committed to restoring the dignity of the human person and strengthening Christian families. The mission of the CPA is to support mental health practitioners by promoting the development of psychological theory and mental health practice which encompass a full understanding of the human person, family, and society in fidelity to the Magisterium of the Catholic Church.

In addition to Fr. Schu, two other members of the CPA Board are from the DMU community. Sr. Mary Patrice Ahearn, RSM, Psy.D. serves as the President and Chair (term ending 2024), and Ian Masson, MS, LPC serves as a Member-At-Large and Webinar Chair (term ending 2026). We are grateful to Fr. Schu, Sr. Mary Patrice, and Ian for their faithful service to the CPA!

Scan here for more information about the Catholic Psychotherapy Association (CPA).



Fr. Walter Schu, LC, S.Th.D.



Sr. Mary Patrice Ahearn, RSM, Psy.D.



Ian Masson, MS, LPC

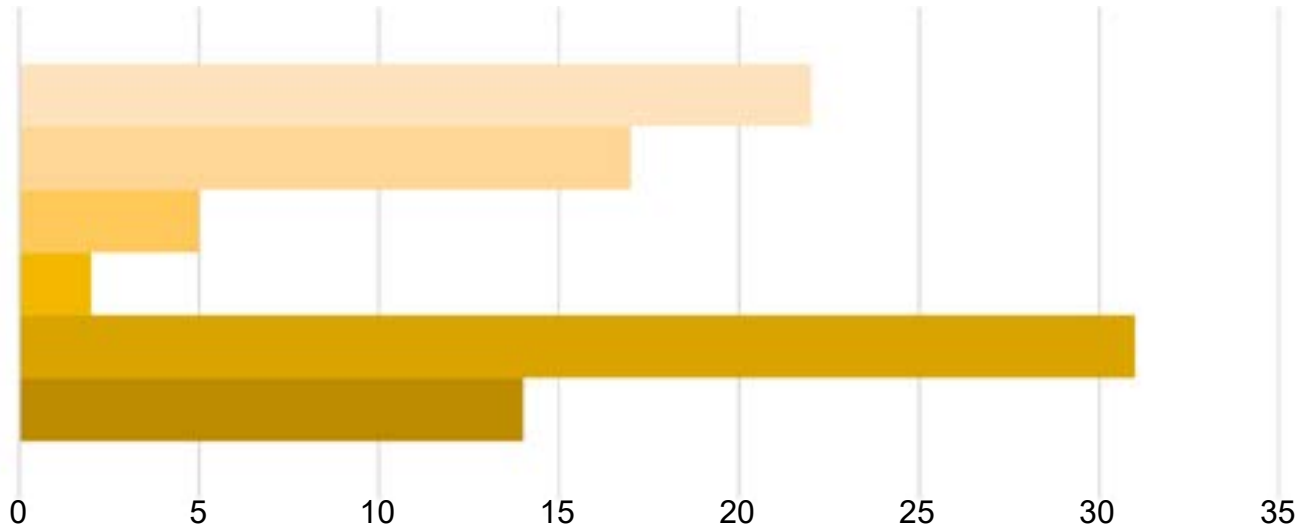
PARTNERSHIPS



Steven Showalter
Director of Partnerships

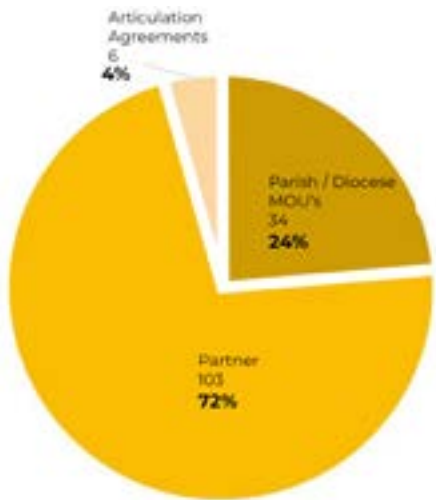
Partnership agreements:

List of targeted Colleges and Universities - 364
Coverage is in 50 US states, Mexico, and Canada



- Organizations
- Pending agreements in Canada
- Canadian Colleges and Universities
- Pending agreements in US
- US Colleges & Universities
- Diocese

Students currently under an MOU, Partner Organization, or Articulation Agreement:



NEW OXFORD REVIEW ON THE CCMMMP

Deborah Savage is Professor of Theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville. In June of 2023, she wrote a review of DMU's seminal textbook, *A Catholic-Christian Meta-Model of the Person*. The following are excerpts from her review, and scan the QR code below to read the full article:

A Catholic Christian Meta-Model of the Person: Integration with Psychology & Mental Health Practice is as multifaceted as its title implies. Perhaps the reader approaches it with a little trepidation. But to open this book is to encounter a rare example of that most difficult of academic exercises: collaboration between distinct disciplines with an eye on arriving at a new synthesis of their shared insights. What is rare about this effort is that it is successful. A Catholic Christian Meta-Model is a monumental achievement, one that reflects the best of what the scholarly community has to offer.

This volume is the fruit of over two decades of steady, continuous effort by an impressive group of scholars and practitioners whose purpose is to forge a meaningful synthesis between three distinct "wisdom traditions" that for centuries have sought to arrive at a full understanding of the human person: psychology, the Western philosophical tradition, and the Judeo-Christian theological tradition. The authors' stated intent is to present "a synthetic and systematic, realist framework for understanding the person," one that provides a fully integrated account of the human person as well as the scaffolding for effective therapeutic and mental-health practices. Their work illuminates the self-evident fact that none of these disciplines, laboring independently of the others, can arrive at such a sought-after prize. But it also reveals the need for a vision, a principle of integration, that transcends each of them. And here that integrating principle is provided by a specifically Catholic vision of the person, grounded in Scripture, Tradition, and the Magisterium.

As a practical matter, it would be an understatement to point out that mental health has become a matter of worldwide concern. Anyone concerned about the future of mankind and that of Western civilization — and who understands that it is the human person himself who is at risk — will recognize this contribution as a lifeline thrown to a drowning man.

If properly recognized, A Catholic Christian Meta-Model has the potential to address the most significant health crisis of our day. It is to be hoped that the contribution it represents makes its way into the common sense of the culture. Our future hangs in the balance.

Scan here to read
the full article:



CENTER FOR TRAUMA AND RESILIENCY STUDIES (CTRS) BEYOND OUR CAMPUS



Benjamin B.
Keyes, PhD, EdD,
LPC
Director, Center
for Trauma and
Resiliency Studies
Executive Director,
Green Cross
Academy of
Traumatology

HIGHLIGHTS

February - Florida Mental Health Counseling Association Conference in Lake Mary - Workshop regarding the use of Gestalt techniques in the HEART Model.

February - Florida Mental Health Counseling Association virtual conference - Presentation on early childhood trauma, complex mental health disorders, and the HEART Model.

March - Turkey - Workshop on Compassion Fatigue given to volunteers helping the effort.

April - Virginia - Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster Annual Meeting in Richmond - Marketing opportunity with all Virginia organizations involved in disaster relief.

July and August - Romania - Worked alongside clinicians with the Smiles Foundation and gave presentations and workshops at Oradea University and agencies throughout the area regarding trauma recovery, gypsies, refugees, and survivors of complex trauma. See Dr. Keyes' notes on this trip below!

September - Tennessee - American Association of Christian Counselors Semi-Annual Conference in Nashville - Presentation on forgiveness and its use with the Meta-Model.

October - Maryland - Association of Christian Therapists (ACTHeals) Conference in Baltimore - Presentation of the HEART Model.

October - Cameroon - ME4REAL Annual Conference in Yaoundé - Workshops for mental health clinicians involved in working with survivors of their current civil war, with special representation on behalf of the Cameroon government. Workshops included Sexual Trauma, EMDR, Grief and Loss, and Child and Adolescent Trauma.

October - Mexico - Anahuac Veracruz University Virtual Conference - Presentation on Compassion Fatigue.

October - Florida Mental Health Counseling Association Conference in Ft. Lauderdale - Workshop on the HEART Model.

November - California - International Association of Emergency Managers Conference in Long Beach - Presentations on Compassion Fatigue.



Dr. Benjamin Keyes was recently recognized as an honoree and awarded the 2022 Outstanding Leadership Award at the Education 2.0 Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. Dr. Keyes received this reward on account of his Immersive Education Model which offers clinicians a fresh perspective in helping clients from severely traumatized populations to heal and flourish.

“The CTRS helps all First Responders but especially Police Officers by offering certified and accredited courses and training in Compassion Fatigue, Grief and Loss, Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention, Psychological First Aid, and Field Trauma. The Training in Compassion Fatigue and Suicide Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention has saved many lives as Officers learn to take care of themselves when working under stress and then how to work with others who have also been under stress. The techniques are practical and effective in decreasing the desire for suicide or the inability to function well when in the field.”

- Dr. Keyes



Scan QR code to watch full episode 25



Scan QR code to watch full episode 26



For more information about CTRS training schedules and certifications, scan here:



DR. KEYES' NOTES ON TRAININGS IN ANTALYA, TURKEY

We brought a group of CTRS students to Turkey after the devastating earthquake there in 2023. We had been called upon by Elam Ministries asking for DMU-trained therapists to provide psychological counseling and trauma fieldwork. Working with volunteers from a group of churches committed to helping survivors of the disaster, the group explained CTRS and Green Cross treatment modalities. It was clear there was great need due to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, and both the CTRS and Green Cross Academy were activated in response to this crisis.



DR. KEYES' NOTES ON TRAININGS IN ROMANIA

In July and August of 2023, the CTRS embarked on its annual trip to Romania where students as well as licensed clinicians fulfill the supervised, clinical hours required for Green Cross Certification to become Certified Clinical Traumatologists. This is done in partnership with clinicians from other countries who offer both individual and group therapy to traumatized populations with special expertise in domestic violence, trafficking, and sexual and physical abuse.



While there, DMU teams joined local social workers for home visits to families, and counseled individuals with past histories of severe trauma. Working alongside Romanian interpreters, the field teams provided families and individuals with a sympathetic ear, prayer, coping skills, and self-regulation techniques. Other teams gave presentations to local police officers, social workers, and university professors at Agora University in Oradea, focusing on conflict, culture, and negotiation.

The final days of the journey included visits to a state psychiatric hospital, nursing homes, a gypsy camp, and Caritas Oradea, which is an older adult living center run by a charitable organization. Additionally, CTRS students gave presentations on compassion fatigue, self care, and communication skills to the full-time staff of the Smiles Foundation, as well as talks on parenting skills and child adoption to those at Carmel Church.



In summary, not only did CTRS students provide needed emotional and therapeutic support for those they served, they also learned much about an array of prominent mental health issues such as domestic violence, youth and adolescent trauma, psychosis, delusion, various personality disorders, and schizophrenia.

ADVANCEMENT

WILL YOU BECOME A PARTNER IN THIS VITAL MISSION TO BUILD A CHRIST-CENTERED CULTURE OF MENTAL HEALTH?

As you've seen throughout our Annual Report, here at DMU we are training students to become faithful, Catholic-Christian mental health professionals, counselors, therapists, spiritual directors, and much more. After our first 25 years, DMU is truly on the forefront of the mental health field, and we have exciting plans and aspirations to increase our reach and impact over the next 25 years and beyond. Our students, faculty, and graduates are positively impacting countless lives and helping to spread Christ's healing work locally and globally.



Thomas Cronquist
Director of
Institutional
Advancement

YOU CAN BE A PART OF OUR MISSION TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

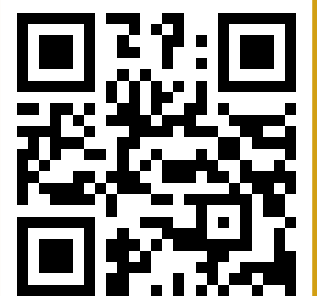
I hope you've enjoyed reading this report, and if you are already a supporter of our vital mission, **thank you for your generosity!** If this is your first encounter with DMU, I hope the stories in this report will inspire you to join us in our mission to make a difference in the mental health field.

Thank you for your trust in DMU, and we are honored to build a Christ-centered culture of mental health on your behalf!

There are many ways to support DMU, and one of the biggest needs is scholarships for current and future students. **Scan the QR code or visit our website at divinemercury.edu/donate to make a gift today!**

You can also give us a call at (703) 589-9074 to make a gift over the phone, or mail a check to DMU at the following address:

Divine Mercy University
45154 Underwood Lane
Sterling, VA 20166



If you have any questions about DMU or our mission, please contact me, Thomas Cronquist, at (703) 518-0281 or tcronquist@divinemercury.edu. I look forward to talking with you.

Thank you for your generous support! Be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones!

BUILDING OUR NEW ST. DYMPHNA CHAPEL

Construction has been underway for a few months now, and we are looking forward to the completion of our new St. Dymphna Chapel! We plan to have the construction and furnishings completed by the fall.

The success of our mission to form mental health professionals who understand man's true dignity ultimately depends upon Our Lord's grace and blessing. Our new chapel will be a place for students, faculty, and staff to receive many essential graces through prayer, meditation, and reception of the Sacraments.

The chapel will be dedicated to St. Dymphna and will honor many other patron saints of mental health, such as St. Josephine Bakhita, St. Faustina, and St. Mark Ji, whom you can read about on our chapel website. The lives of these saints are very inspiring, calling us to practice the same wonderful virtues that they did.



WOULD YOU LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARD THIS BEAUTIFUL PLACE OF PRAYER AND THE SACRAMENTS?

If you would like to make a donation to support our new chapel, **you can go to our website at divinemeracy.edu/new-chapel-donate, or scan the QR code. You can also mail in a gift to DMU (be sure to write "new chapel" on the memo line of your check), or call us at (703) 589-9074 to give over the phone.** Memorial opportunities are still available!

We sincerely thank all our donors for their support of our new St. Dymphna Chapel! We hope that you will visit and pray with us when all the work is completed. Until then, be assured of our prayers for you and your loved ones.



Scan this QR code to make your gift towards the St. Dymphna Chapel!



ANCHORING OUR UNIVERSITY IN THE SACRAMENTAL LIFE



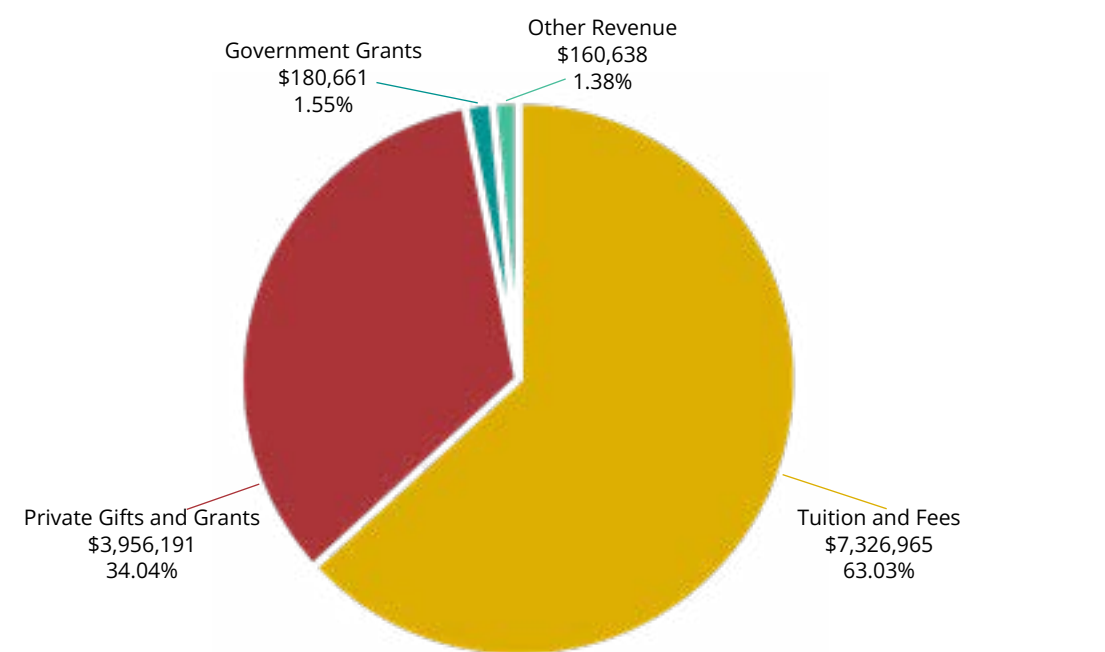
If you have any intentions that we can pray for, especially during our monthly Mass offered specifically for our benefactors' intentions, please let us know by submitting them via the QR code. May God bless you abundantly!



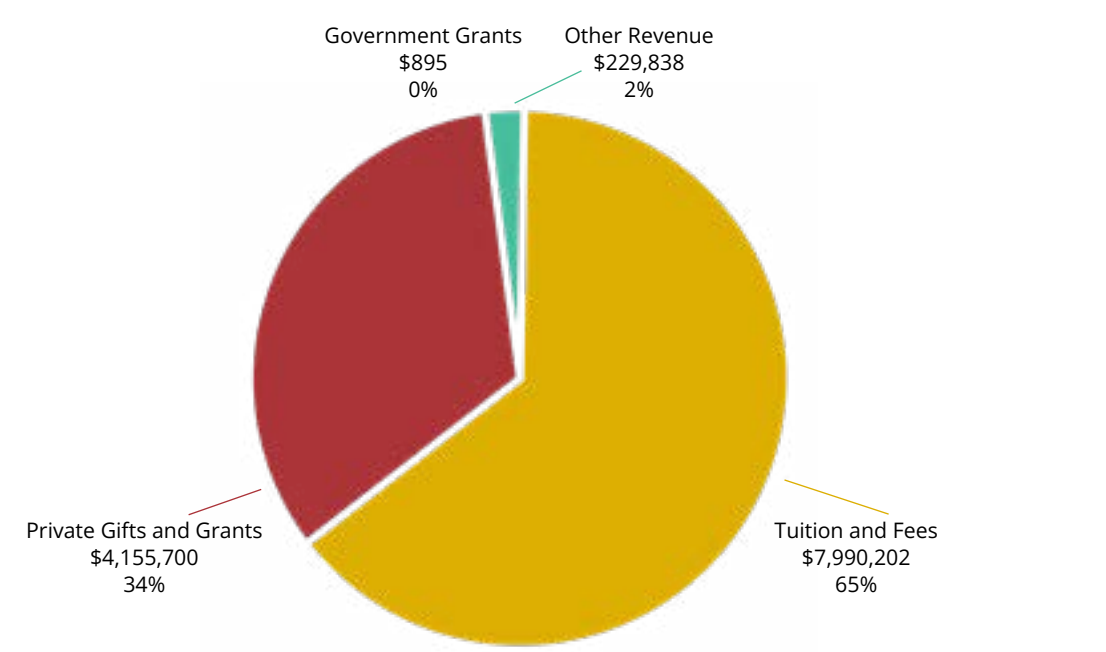
Scan this QR code to send us your prayer intentions!

FINANCIALS

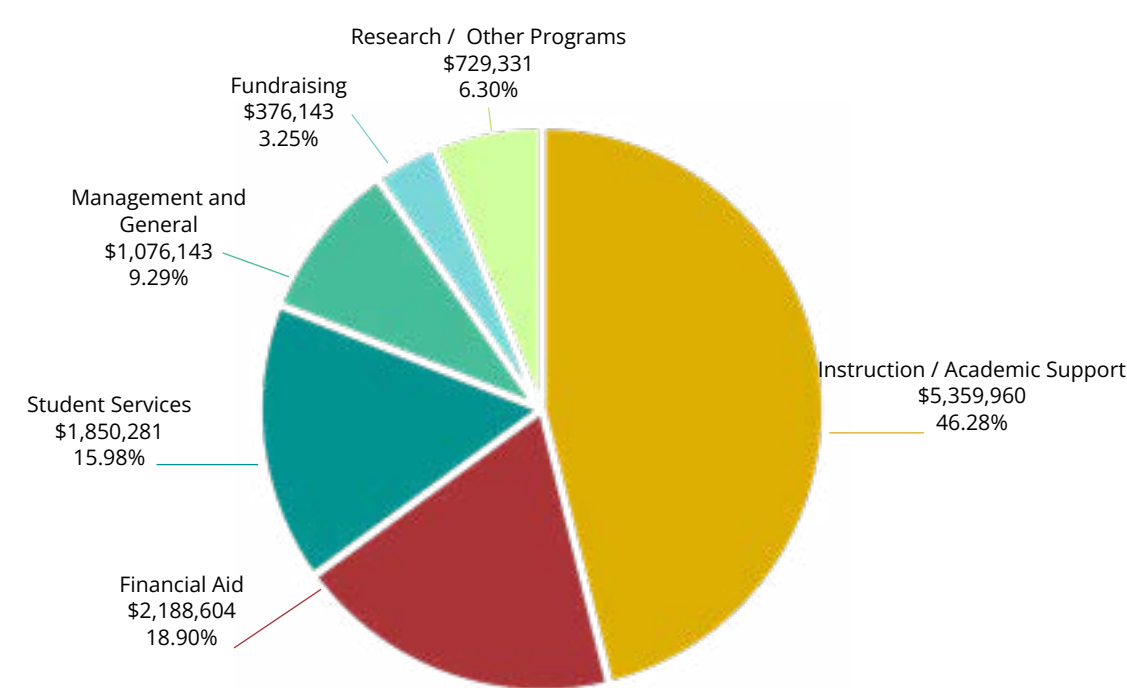
Operating Revenue 2021-2022



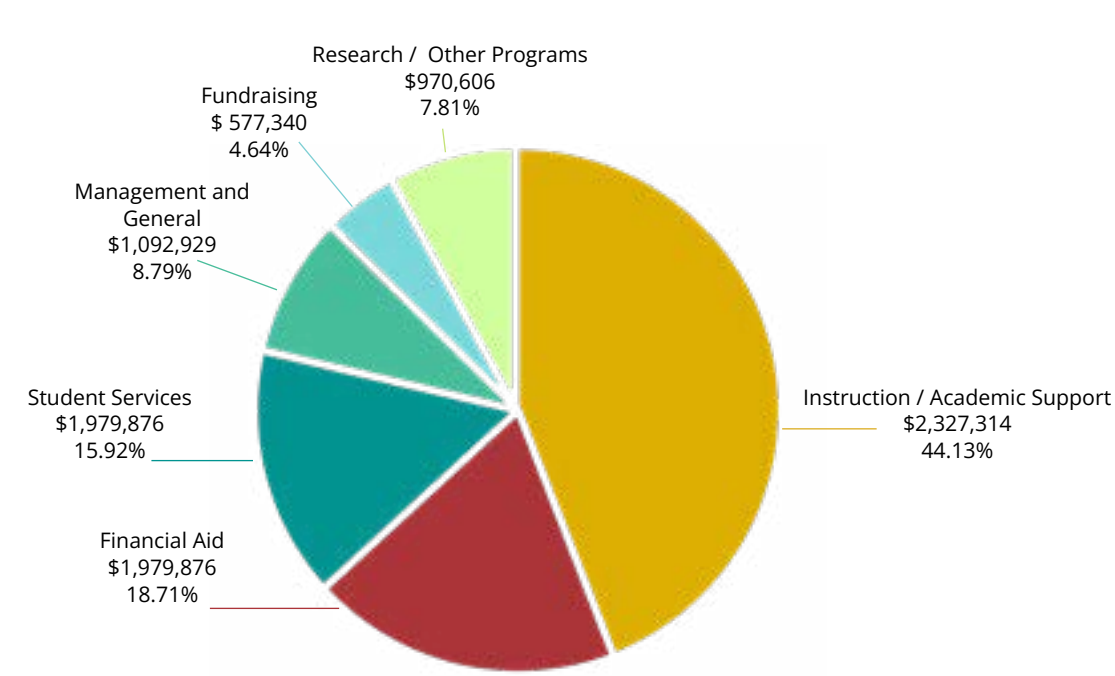
Operating Revenue 2022-2023



Operating Expenses 2021-2022

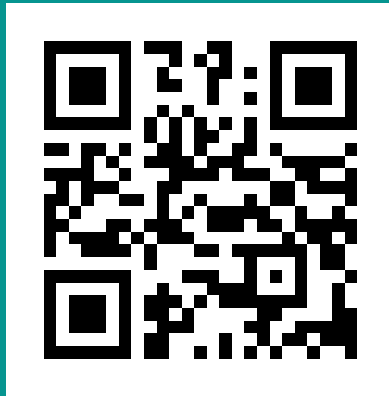


Operating Expenses 2022-2023





DIVINE MERCY UNIVERSITY



We are grateful for your continued support as your tax-deductible gifts of any size ensure that many more students will benefit from a degree from DMU, and take Christ's healing power to those suffering from mental illness.

For more information on our programs,
please visit our website at
www.divinemercy.edu

Divine Mercy University
45154 Underwood Lane
Sterling, VA 20166