



South Carolina Commission on Higher Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Ken Wingate, Chair, and Members, S.C. Commission on Higher Education
From: Dr. Bettie Rose Horne, Chair, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

Consideration of Request for Initial License to offer a program leading to the M.A., Counseling Lenoir-Rhyne University, Hickory, NC, following merger with the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia

Summary

Lenoir-Rhyne University (LRU), in Hickory, NC (www.lr.edu) requests approval to offer a program leading to the M.A. degree in Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling. According to the proposal, the University will deliver the program through face-to-face, hybrid, and online modes to begin in fall 2012.

LRU is a non-profit corporation affiliated with the North Carolina Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The institution began in 1891 as Highland College; it became Lenoir-Rhyne College in 1924, and changed its name to Lenoir-Rhyne University in 2008. Currently LRU's entire operation is on its campus in Hickory, NC. However, the institution anticipates by the fall semester of 2012 to have completed a merger with the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) in Columbia, where it will continue the seminary's current operations and expand with new programs. The address of the LTSS is 4210 North Main Street, approximately two miles north of Elmwood Avenue. If the merger does not occur the University will not offer the additional program at the Columbia campus. LRU has also begun development of a branch in Asheville, NC, where it will offer programs leading to graduate degrees.

The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) has accredited LRU since 1928. It is presently engaged in its 10-year review with an on-site team visit to take place in late February 2012.

The following information from the U.S. Department of Education shows student loan default rates at LRU:

School	Type	Programs		FY2009	FY2008	FY2007
Lenoir-Rhyné University Hickory NC	Master's Degree or Doctor's Degree	Federal Family Educational Loans and Federal Direct Loan (FFEL/FDL)	Default Rate	4.7 %	5 %	4.2 %
			No. in Default	18	18	18
			No. in Repay	377	356	426
			Enrollment figures	1813	1890	1784
			Percentage Calculation	20.8 %	18.8 %	23.9 %

To provide context for the Cohort Default Rate (CDR), USDE includes enrollment data (students enrolled at any time during the year) and a corresponding percentage (borrowers entering repayment divided by that enrollment figure). While there is no direct relationship between the timing of when a borrower entered repayment (October 1 through September 30) and any particular enrollment year, these data are for the academic year ending on the June 30 prior to the beginning of the cohort year (e.g., FY 2008 CDR Year uses 2006-2007 enrollment).

The USDE sanctions a school when the school's three most recent cohort default rates are 25 percent or higher or if a school's current default rate is greater than 40 percent. Except in the event of a successful adjustment or appeal, such a school will lose FFEL, Direct Loan, and Federal Pell Grant program eligibility for the remainder of the fiscal year in which the school is notified of its sanction and for the following two fiscal years.

Courses in most of the counseling program will be offered on the campus of the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary (LTSS) in Columbia. In addition, some courses are available online. The Columbia campus provides teaching and learning facilities typically found on a traditional college campus, e.g., multiple classroom facilities, library, student union, auditorium/chapel facility, student living spaces, and offices for faculty and staff. Class scheduling for the new program will be coordinated with existing classes of the seminary to satisfy space needs. Upon formal merger, Lenoir-Rhyné University will own the facilities.

Students have access to learning resources available at the LTSS campus. In addition, electronic resources will be available to the students through the LRU library. LTSS is served by Lineberger Memorial Library, which provides access to a wide variety of print and on-line resources which support the curriculum. The collection of approximately 100,000 volumes contains classics as well as up-to-date material. The library subscribes to approximately 400 journals and provides others through the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) online theology periodicals. Through the Eastern Cluster Catalog Online (ECCO) of Lutheran Seminaries partnership, students have access to materials from the LTSS library and partner Lutheran seminaries in Gettysburg and Philadelphia. Among the online databases are approximately 475 counseling-related journals, 5,401 medical-related journals, and 1,813 social science-related journals. The Lineberger Library is staff by two professional librarians, one full-time staff person, and a number of work-study students. On the Hickory, NC, campus, the Rudisill Library is staffed by four professional librarians, three full-time staff members, and university student workers.

LRU will hire faculty and staff to support the program upon licensure of LRU by the Commission. A full-time terminally-credentialed faculty member in Columbia will coordinate the program. He or she will report to the chairman of the School of Counseling and Human Services at the Hickory campus. The chairman reports to the dean and the dean reports to the University provost. Faculty who teach in the counseling program must hold a terminal degree in a counseling or appropriately related field.

Candidates for admission to the program leading to the Master of Arts degree in Counseling must have earned an undergraduate degree with a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.7 on a 4.0 scale, OR a minimum GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in a master's degree program in counseling or related field; scored either a minimum of 390 on the Miller Analogies Test (MAT) or placed in the 35th percentile on the GRE with a combined verbal and quantitative scores and with a minimal verbal score in the 40th percentile. Applicants must also submit three letters of professional recommendation and a writing sample clearly articulating goals and life experiences that were catalysts to pursuing a graduate degree in counseling.

A student must complete the degree requirements within six years of admission. Upon the recommendation of the program coordinator and with the approval of the chairman of the School of Counseling and Human Services, the University registrar, and the dean for graduate studies, a student may transfer up to six (6) semester credits of graduate work completed at another accredited institution or at Lenoir-Rhyne as a non-degree student prior to formal admission. Exceptions to this limit may be made with the approval of the Graduate Studies Council and the dean for graduate studies. Each course transferred must have a grade point of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale and must have been completed within ten years preceding the completion of the program of study for the master's degree (student's graduation date).

The officials at Lenoir-Rhyne University project enrolling 16 new students in the first year and 20-25 new students each year thereafter. Tuition is \$415 per credit hour, a total of \$24,900 for the 60-semester-credit-hour M.A. degree in Counseling.

The program leading to the Master of Arts degree in Counseling is designed to prepare individuals for positions as professional counselors in agencies and/or school settings. The counseling program places primary emphasis on the development of strong clinical skills.

Counselors work in diverse community settings designed to provide a variety of counseling, rehabilitation, and support services. Their duties vary greatly, depending on their specialty, which is determined by the setting in which they work and the population they serve. Although the specific setting may have an implied scope of practice, counselors frequently provide guidance in dealing with children, adolescents, adults, or families that have multiple issues, such as mental health disorders and addiction, disability and employment needs, school problems, career counseling needs, and trauma.

Lenoir-Rhyne University M.A., Counseling Curriculum	
COU 505 Counseling Theories	3
COU 520 Mental Health Methods, Intervention, and Issues	3
COU 524 Psychological and Educational Testing and Appraisal	3
COU 525 Professional and Ethical Issues	3
COU 530 Counseling Techniques and Practicum	3
COU 535 Diversity Issues for Helping Professionals	3
COU 540 Group Counseling Theory and Practice	3
COU 545 Career Counseling and Practicum	3
COU 550 Psychopathology, Diagnosis, and Treatment Planning	3
COU 555 Consultation Procedures and Crisis Intervention	3
COU 560 Foundations of Marriage and Family Therapy	3
COU 592 Mental Health Internship I (300 hours)	3
COU 593 Mental Health Internship II(300 hours)	3
EDU 500 Quantitative Methods	3
EDU 500 Quantitative Methods	3
EDU 505 Research Methodology, and Practicum	3
EDU 506 Child, Individual, and Family Development	3
Emphasis Courses (selected under advisement)	9
Total Semester Hours	60

The Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs (CACREP), the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), and the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) accredit counseling programs. The University is developing its application for initial accreditation and submitted with its application for initial licensure a timeline under which it would submit the self-study in June 2012, undergo the required evaluation, and expect CACREP to reach a final decision of accreditation by January 2013. Graduation from a program holding specialized accreditation is required for employment in some but not all positions in the field.

In South Carolina, the Department of Labor, Licensing, and Regulation's Board of Professional Counselors, Marriage and Family Therapists, and Psycho-Educational Specialists licenses (1) professional counselors and (2) marriage and family therapists. Counselor licensure candidates must complete a graduate degree with a minimum of 48 semester hours in counseling or a related discipline. Candidates pass either the National Counselor Examination (NCE) or National Clinical Mental Health Counselor Examination (NCMHCE). Both are administered by the National Board for Certified Counselors (NBCC). Marriage and family therapist licensure candidates must pass the national Marital and Family Therapy Examination administered by Professional Examination Service (PES).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), job openings are expected to exceed the number of graduates of counseling programs, especially in rural areas. Employment of substance abuse and behavioral disorder counselors is expected to grow by 21 percent, which is much faster than the average for all occupations. As society becomes more knowledgeable about addiction, more people are seeking treatment. Furthermore, drug offenders are increasingly being sent to treatment programs rather than to jail. Also according to the BLS, median annual wages of mental health counselors in May 2008 were \$36,810. The middle 50 percent earned

between \$28,930 and \$48,580. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$23,580, and the highest 10 percent earned more than \$63,100. Median annual wages in the industries employing the largest numbers of mental health counselors were as follows:

Local government	\$45,510
Offices of other health practitioners	40,880
Outpatient care centers	37,590
Individual and family services	36,130
Residential mental retardation, mental health and substance abuse facilities	29,950

Institutions that offer master's degree programs in counseling		
Institution	Program	Specialized Accreditation
Public		
Citadel	M.Ed., Counselor Education	CACREP
Clemson	M.Ed., Counselor Education	CACREP
Clemson	M.Ed., Community Counseling	CACREP
South Carolina State	M.A., Rehabilitation Counseling	CORE
South Carolina State	M.Ed., Counselor Education	CACREP
U.S.C., Columbia	Ed.S., School Counseling	CACREP
U.S.C., Columbia	Master of Rehabilitation Counseling (M.R.C.)	CORE
U.S.C., Columbia	Counselor Education and Supervision	CACREP
U.S.C., Columbia	Ed.S., Martial, Couple, and Family Counseling/Therapy	CACREP
Winthrop	M.Ed., Counseling and Development; Community Counseling and School Counseling	CACREP
Independent		
Bob Jones	M.S., Biblical Counseling;	None
Columbia International University	M.A., Counseling	None
Columbia International University through its Seminary and School of Ministry	M.A., Pastoral Counseling and Spiritual Formation	ATS
Erskine	M.A., Pastoral Studies/Counseling	ATS
Licensed		
South	M.A., Professional Counseling	None
Springfield	M.A., Human Services, Community Counseling	None
Webster	M.A., Counseling	None

Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP)

Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE)

Association of Theological Schools (ATS)

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commends favorably to the Commission initial licensure for five years to the Lenoir-Rhyne University a program leading to the Master of Arts degree in Counseling provided that 1) no “unique cost” or other special state funding be required or requested and 2) the institution discontinue advertising and enrolling students into the program if it becomes apparent that it is unable to gain CACREP accreditation before the graduation of the first class.