

# ANNUAL NEWSLETTER 2022 – 2023

## END OF A CHAPTER

As we are nearing the end of the the 2022 – 2023 academic year, it is important to reflect on the growth, accomplishments, dedication, and resilience from our students, faculty, and staff.

The Louisiana State University – Shreveport Master of Science in Counseling Program is committed to providing comprehensive education to our students, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to make a positive impact in the lives of their clients. Through rigorous coursework, hands-on training, and meaningful field experiences, our students gain a deep understanding of the complexities of counseling and the diverse populations they serve. This past year has been marked by numerous achievements. Our talented faculty, staff, and students have been actively engaged in groundbreaking research, impactful teaching, and meaningful service to our community. We have expanded our partnerships with local mental health agencies, enabling our students to gain valuable real-world experience while making a difference in their communities. As we look to the future, we are excited to continue building on the strengths of our program and ensuring that our graduates are well-equipped to meet the needs of the counseling profession.



**MSC Smiles:** New faculty member, Dr. Michael Becerra poses, with LSUS MSC students at a counseling mixer.

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The Louisiana State University – Shreveport Master of Science in Counseling Program, is a 60-hour, CACREP accredited program that emphasizes clinical skill, scholarly knowledge, multicultural competence, and research design.



# WHAT HAPPENED?

*Take a look at what the LSUS Master of Science in Counseling students and faculty have accomplished this academic school year.*

The Louisiana State University – Shreveport, Master of Science in Counseling Program continues to grow in numbers. As of the Spring 2023 semester, approximately 52 students are currently enrolled in the LSUS Master's of Science in Counseling Program. This academic year, students and faculty accomplished many professional projects. Dr. Nelson and Dr. Becerra hosted Counseling Mixers and rendered presentations based on current trends in the counseling profession. These mixers provided professional networking and CEU opportunities for LSUS Master's of Science in Counseling students and local mental health professionals.



**MSC Family:** Above, LSUS MSC Students (from left to right) Annie Sinclair, Candace Metoyer, and Ian Merritt sit outside after class.

The LSUS Master of Science in Counseling Program recently gained a new core faculty member, Dr. Michael Becerra. For more than 15 years, Dr. Michael Becerra has been committed to developing his academic and counseling careers. He started by counseling at-risk students in Dallas, Texas, while instructing in a substance abuse counseling program at a community college. He spent six years in Colombia seeking international experience, where he taught and helped small businesses grow via digital media and audiovisual projects. He also engaged in scholarly research with a nearby university research team. Dr. Becerra subcontracts for the Social Security Administration's Office of Hearings in Puerto Rico as a virtual bilingual vocational expert witness while teaching counseling and conducting research at LSUS. Through his private practice, he also provides wellness counseling and life coaching for his clients, drawing on various experiences and abilities. His research interests are men's wellness, personal and professional self, Latino families, medical cannabis, and counselor technology use. We are so excited to have Dr. Becerra on our team!



**New Addition:** Dr. Michael Becerra, pictured above, joined the LSUS MSC faculty in the fall semester of 2022.



**Potluck:** Dr. Becerra organizes a potluck for LSUS MSC students at the end of the semester.

The LSUS Master of Science in Counseling program recently founded a Counseling Student Association. The organization is led by Elaine Lemieux Barbee (President) and Shawanda Burks (Vice President). This registered student organization was created to provide currently enrolled LSUS MSC students with opportunities for networking and professional/personal development. The LSUS Counseling Student Association hosted their first fundraiser at Dillas Quesadillas this year. The LSUS Counseling Student Association is advised by Dr. Michael Becerra, new LSUS MSC faculty member. Scan the QR code to check out the LSUS Counseling Student Association Instagram page!



# OUT IN THE COMMUNITY

The Louisiana State University – Shreveport Master of Science in Counseling Program hosted a number of mixers for professional networking opportunities for students and CEUs for those in the community.

The mixers included current and past LSUS MSC students, LSUS MSC faculty, Licensed Professional Counselors/Supervisors, and Provisional

Licensed Professional Counselors from Northwest Louisiana. Dr. Michael Becerra and Dr. Meredith Nelson collaborated and presented on topics relevant to current trends in the counseling profession. LSUS MSC students gathered at Antonio's Italian Cuisine to hear Dr. Becerra and Dr. Nelson present on "Cannabis Trends in Louisiana." Students also met at Twisted Root Burger Co. to listen to Dr. Nelson and Dr. Becerra speak on "P-LPC Professionalism".



**In the Community:** LSUS MSC students gather to hear Dr. Michael Becerra speak at Antonio's Italian Cuisine.

Guests such as Dr. Anthony Williams, LPC-S, Executive Director at Williams Counseling Services of Shreveport, was able to network and share their professional counseling expertise with current LSUS MSC students.

Dr. Michael Becerra has been extremely active in the community. Dr. Becerra presented a research documentary titled, "Formando al Terapeuta," at the Latino Film Fest held at the Robinson Film Center in Shreveport. His work highlighted faculty, student, and student family interviews regarding the importance of exploring the professional self of students and how their families impact their professional development.

Dr. Becerra also serves as a bilingual volunteer at the Martin Luther King Jr. Health Center and at the Bridge Alzheimer's & Dementia Association.



**Branching Out:** New faculty member, Dr. Michael Becerra, presents his documentary at the Robinson Film Center.

The LSUS Master of Science in Counseling program has three Graduate Assistants that work diligently to assist faculty with projects and assignments.

Graduate Assistants Alyssa Garza, Elaine Lemieux Barbee, and Shawanda Burks travel to different college campuses in the Northwest Louisiana area to promote and represent the LSUS MSC program. The graduate assistants attended the NSU Graduate Career Fair, Centenary Career Fair, LSUS Career Fair for Middle Schoolers, and the LSUHSC for Brain Health Alzheimer's Conference. All of the LSUS Graduate Assistants are crucial assets to the MSC team and continue to do great work on campus every day.



**Representing LSUS:** LSUS MSC Graduate Assistants Alyssa Garza, Elaine Lemieux Barbee, and Shawanda Burks representing the LSUS MSC Program alongside Dr. Becerra.

# STUDENT SPOTLIGHTS

*The LSUS Master of Science in Counseling Program would like to acknowledge and appreciate their student's dedication and drive to excel in the counseling profession.*

Senior students in the LSUS Master of Science in Counseling program with a Rehabilitation concentration,

recently presented at the LSUS 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Regional Student Scholars Forum on Friday, February 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, at the LSUS University Center with Dr. Kacie Blalock serving as their advisor/mentor. LSUS Graduate



**Scholarly Students:** Above, LSUS MSC Rehabilitation students gather to present at the LSUS Student Scholars Forum.

and undergraduate students from universities in Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Texas were invited to attend/present. Students were required to submit an oral or poster presentation of their original research/creative work in their desired subject area. In the picture above, from left to right, Brandon Rainwater, Brianna Brown, Chloe Suire, and Shawanda Burks were selected to attend and rendered a presentation titled, "Mental Illness as a Predictor of Suicide Among Asian American Young Adults."

LSUS Master of Science in Counseling student Annie Sinclair collaborated with Dr. Michael Becerra and Dr. Meredith Nelson on an article related to cannabis and counseling.



**Collaboration:** LSUS student, Annie Sinclair, and Dr. Becerra work on their publication.

Students were also at the forefront of many conferences as well. LSUS MSC students, Masson Tuggle, Tonya Schaan, Brandon Rainwater, and Brianna Brown attended the Louisiana Counseling Association Conference in New Orleans in September of 2022. They participated in a round table discussion that focused on the exploration of successful ways to navigate challenges that are barriers to completing a graduate program in counseling.



**Outstanding Achievement:** Above, LSUS MSC students Elaine Lemieux Barbee and Tonya Schaan accept their awards from the LSUS Chancellor, Larry Clark at the LSUS 2022-2023 Academic Convocation.

On April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, students Elaine Lemieux Barbee and Tonya Schaan received awards at the 2022-2023 LSUS Academic Convocation. Elaine received an award for her Outstanding Achievement in the LSUS Master of Science in Counseling program with a Concentration in Rehabilitation Counseling. Tonya received an award for her Outstanding Achievement in the LSUS Master of Science in Counseling program. Congratulations to both students on their achievements!

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS

As the year closes, we would like to highlight all of the amazing accomplishments the LSUS MSC faculty has achieved. See what **Dr. Michael Becerra** accomplished this academic year below:

- Created and became the faculty advisor for the new Counseling Student Association.
- Publication in the Journal of Marital and Family Therapy an article titled - *El Ser del Terapeuta: A narrative examination into family-of-origin influence on students' professional self in Colombia family therapy training.*
- Publication of book titled, "*Tras las cortinas del consultorio: Narrativas desde la familia de origen del terapeuta.*" This book explores how families of origin influence the professional self of psychology and counseling students in training to work with families. Editorial UPB published the book in Spanish in Medellin, Colombia.
- Submitted article, "*Exploring Use of Documentary Research as a Tool for the Development of Therapeutic Resources in Family Therapy and Psychology Supervision and Training,*" to Journal of Training and Education in Professional Psychology.
- Submitted article, "*Emerging Specialty in Medical Cannabis and Psychedelic Studies* to Counselor Education & Supervision Journal. This article highlights the need for counselors to receive education in medical cannabis and psychedelics.
- Creation of a Medical Cannabis and Psychedelics Studies graduate certificate in collaboration with the Louisiana Addiction Research Center (LARC) at LSU Health Shreveport and LSUS Continuing Education.
- Participated as a judge for the Student Scholars Forum during Spring 2023 semester.
- Invited to provide clinical supervision training to psychology faculty at the Universidad Catolica de Pereira, Pereira, Colombia.
- Invited to speak to psychology faculty at the Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina in Pereira, Colombia, regarding multicultural aspects and professional self.
- Invited to collaborate with Colegio Colombiano de Psicólogos on creating medical cannabis curriculum standards for training psychologists.
- Invited to collaborate with Filigrana Caribe, a clinical and psychosocial training center in Barranquilla, Colombia. The center's mission is to democratize mental health and family therapy and train psychologists, counselors, and other mental health professionals.
- Appointed to the Louisiana Governor's Task Force on SR 58 of the 2022 Legislature to create a task force to study the implementation of a partnership between law enforcement agencies, behavioral health providers, and hospitals.
- Submitted grant to the Embassy of United States in Bogota titled "Forming the Psychology Student U.S. & Colombian Multicultural Two-Way Exchange Program Shreveport, Louisiana, U.S. + Pereira, Risaralda, CO. The purpose of this faculty and student two-way exchange program is to promote cultural and educational opportunities for multiethnic and/or underrepresented groups of students by providing therapists-in-training and their professors multicultural experiences.
- Enrolled in a certificate training on Basic Cannabinoid Medicine with the Society of Cannabis Clinicians. The certification [covers the essential science of the endocannabinoid system, botany, pharmacology, laboratory analysis, and the dosage and delivery of medical cannabis.](#)
- Participated in the Faculty Research Showcase, where he presented research goals for the year.
- Awarded a Faculty Development Grant 2022-2023 in the amount of \$4500 to conduct a study exploring family influence on minority counseling students at LSUS.

# FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS

**Dr. Kacie Blalock** wore many hats this academic year. Dr. Blalock not only served at the LSUS MSC Program Director but was also the lead author of the research article entitled “Psychometric Validation of the Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy in a Sample of Undergraduate and Graduate Students in Rehabilitation: A Brief Report” which was published in the Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin. This empirical research study was a collaboration with other rehabilitation counselor educators from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Northeastern Illinois University, Virginia Commonwealth University, Illinois Institute of Technology, City University of New York-Hunter College, and the Kessler Foundation. During the 2022-2023 academic year, Dr. Blalock also mentored the senior rehabilitation concentration students with several research projects. Students submitted a proposal to the National Council on Rehabilitation Education Conference. Unfortunately, the conference was cancelled. Students also rendered a presentation entitled “Mental Illness as a Predictor of Suicide Among Asian American Young Adults” at the 8th Annual LSUS Regional Student Scholar Forum. Students also learned how to prepare a manuscript for publication. Shawanda Burks, Alyssa Garza, and Elaine Lemieux are in the process of co-writing a research manuscript with Dr. Blalock on the topic of sexuality and disability, which is expected to be submitted for publication soon. Dr. Blalock also served as a proposal reviewer for Division 22 (Rehabilitation Psychology) of the American Psychological Association’s national conference in Toronto.



**Dr. Kacie Blalock**

She was also a recipient of the “Fostering the Integration of Spiritual Competency Training into Mental Health Graduate Education” Grant. She was one of 20 professors selected nationally to participate in this project. Dr. Blalock received training in religion and spirituality competencies. The Spirituality Competency Training-Mental Health Program was incorporated into the Internship II Course. The internship students participated in an 8-module online training program. The Counseling Program will play a vital role in helping the researchers to empirically determine how to best develop spiritual competencies in graduate students.

**Dr. Meredith Nelson**

also served a primary role in mentoring, programming, and teaching for the LSUS MSC program. Dr. Nelson mentored LSUS MSC students for the Louisiana Counseling Association Conference in New Orleans in September of 2022. She and three other students attended and rendered a



**Dr. Meredith Nelson**

round table discussion exploring successful ways of navigating challenges that are barriers to completing a graduate program in counseling. Dr. Nelson also collaborated with Dr. Becerra to host the Northwest LA LPC-Supervisor/Provisional LPC meeting where they presented on “Cannabis Trends in Louisiana” and “P-LPC Professionalism Issues.” Dr. Nelson also organized a table sponsorship at the November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022, LSU Health Sciences Center for Brain Health Alzheimer’s Conference. Lastly, Dr. Nelson organized a CEU presentation with Dr. Dudley Chewning on “Diagnosing and Treating Trauma, Grief, PNES, and PTSD” which provided 5 CEUs to participants.

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