



THE FOCAL POINT

**Stephens Counseling Program Newsletter
Issue 5**

STEPHENS

COLLEGE

Stephens College Counseling Program
Summer/Fall 2026 | Issue 5
School of Health Sciences | August 2026



Message from the Director

Dear counseling students, alums, and community stakeholders,

The 2025-2026 academic year flew by, hence the delay in Issue 5 of The Focal Point! As with previous issues, Issue 5 highlights the many achievements of our students, faculty, and alumni, along with program activities. Don't miss our features exploring the history of Pride and mental health and unique therapeutic insights from our first equine-assisted learning workshop. We hope you'll explore each section, celebrate our successes, and learn more about these interesting topics!

We're also excited to share that the Counseling program's CACREP accreditation process is moving swiftly, or as swiftly as the process allows! The program's CACREP self-study was approved in early Fall 2025, and we are set to host the CACREP accreditation review team in early October 2026. We look forward to sharing the results of our accreditation review and thank you for your support, patience, and flexibility as we continue strengthening our program.

As we head into another exciting year, we encourage you to continue building friendships with your classmates, seek guidance and mentorship from faculty and supervisors, and, don't forget, prioritize your well-being as you continue building your counseling knowledge and skills!

Cheers to a healthy, challenging, and meaningful 2026-2027 academic year!

Best,
Dr. Kissinger

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Staff, Faculty, & Alumni Spotlight



Dr. Dan Kissinger

Dr. Dan Kissinger, Program Director of the Counseling program, an experienced counselor educator, licensed professional counselor, and clinical supervisor with research interests in wellness, clinical supervision, and student-athlete wellbeing.



Dr. Kendra Shoge

Dr. Kendra Shoge is a licensed professional counselor and counselor educator specializing in play therapy, with research interests in child-centered play, expressive arts, multicultural issues in counseling, racial microaggressions, and counselor education.

Staff, Faculty, & Alumni Spotlight



Dr. Sarah Irvin

Dr. Sarah Irvin, Assistant Professor in the Counseling Program, was awarded the North Central Association of Counselor Education and Supervision (NCACES) Outstanding Professional Teaching Award. This honor recognizes excellence in teaching within counseling, counselor education, and counseling supervision programs across the North Central Region. Congratulations again!



Shana Nunn

Shana Nunn is a Graduate Assistant in the Counseling program at Stephens College, where she is pursuing dual graduate degrees in School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling and serves as Vice Chair of the City of Columbia's Collegiate Advisory Council.

Staff, Faculty, & Alumni Spotlight

The Future of School Counseling & the Case for a Dual Credential

I joined the Stephens College Counseling Program faculty in the fall of 2023. I was hired to redesign and coordinate the Stephens College School Counseling program. My first priority was to update the school counseling curriculum and secure approval of the new curriculum from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). I completed the curriculum update in the Fall of 2023, and we received our approval in early Spring of 2024.

As part of the redesign, we chose to emphasize program flexibility to better meet the evolving needs of counselors-in-training (CITs) and the communities they serve. This led to the creation of a dual-credential pathway that allows students to graduate with the qualifications needed to obtain both a Missouri school counseling certificate and provisional licensure as a professional counselor (PLPC), which can later be upgraded to full licensure (LPC) after completing the required post-graduate supervised experience.

Dr. Andrea Fifield



Our School Counseling Program Offers Two Pathways To Graduation And Credentialling.

The first is the 45-credit plan of study, which qualifies graduates for their Missouri school counseling certificate. The second is the 60-credit, dual credential plan of study, which qualifies graduates for both their school counseling certificate AND their PLPC. Both plans of study are approved by DESE.

Staff, Faculty, & Alumni Spotlight

The Future of School Counseling and the Case for a Dual Credential CONT..

Since implementing the redesigned curriculum, most students in the school counseling specialization have chosen the dual credential option. The 45-credit pathway remains an excellent choice for CITs who are committed exclusively to school counseling and wish to complete their degree in two years of full-time study. The 60-credit, dual credential option, however, is an excellent choice for CITs with an interest in working with children and adolescents across multiple settings, or who appreciate the career flexibility that comes with having multiple credentials.

That flexibility is particularly valuable given the nationwide demand for – and shortage of – both school counselors and licensed mental health counselors. According to the Health Resources and Services Administration (2026), the majority of Missouri counties are designated Mental Health Professional Shortage Areas.



I hope more CITs consider dual credentialing as a way to expand both immediate and long-term career opportunities.

In my professional networks, I have seen increasing crossover between school and clinical counseling. School counselors often pursue LPC licensure to broaden their opportunities, while mental health counselors move into schools and experienced school counselors transition to clinical practice. These trends highlight the growing flexibility of the counseling profession.

One of the greatest joys of my work as a counselor educator has been supporting students in both School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling. I hope our flexible program design empowers them to create careers that are not only successful, but also meaningful and fulfilling throughout their lives.

Faculty and Student News

Black Family Wellness Expo

The Central Missouri Chapter of The Links, Incorporated hosted its annual Black Family Wellness Expo on March 21, 2026, at Douglass High School—a vibrant event promoting health and economic equity for Black families in Columbia.

Stephens College was proudly represented by **Dr. Dan Kissinger** and graduate counseling students **Camille Townson** and **Shana Nunn**, who helped raise awareness about mental health resources and reflected our program's commitment to community engagement.

The expo offered health screenings, legal and financial wellness resources, mental health checkups, and a Kids Corner with free books. Guest speakers and local organizations fostered a day of education, connection, and empowerment.



Pictured (L-R) Shana Nunn, Dr. Dan Kissinger, and Camille Townson



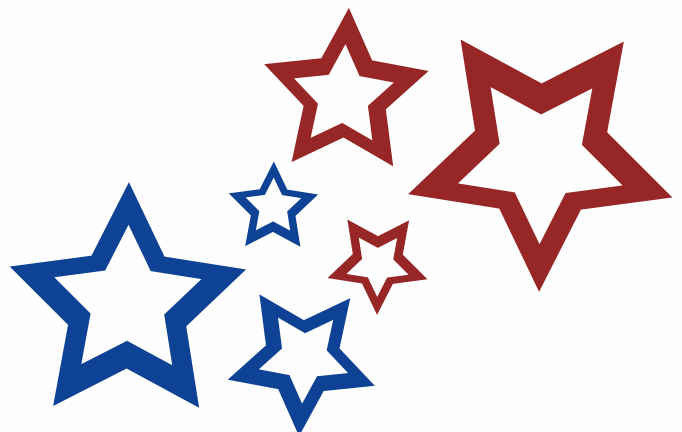
Faculty and Student News

SVASC Open House Fundraiser



Pictured: Amara Reddick

In March 2026, SVASC (Student Veterans of America – Stephens College), led by President **Amara Reddick**, a student in the accelerated dual program for Clinical Mental Health and School Counseling at Stephens College, hosted an open house and raffle to raise funds in support of student veterans, service members, and allies. The event also marked the official launch of the SVASC Stephens College chapter.



Faculty and Student News

Student Advisory Council



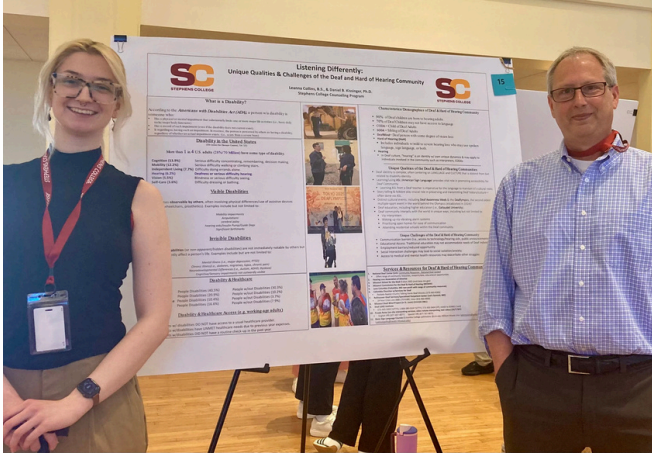
**CMHC Reps Pictured Top-Bottom:
Camellia Bird and Patrick Derboven**

**SC Reps Pictured Top-Bottom: Amara
Reddick and Shana Nunn**

We're excited to welcome new representatives to the program's Student Advisory Council for the Spring 2026–27 term! The newest members were selected by their peers and will represent the School Counseling and Clinical Mental Health Counseling tracks. Congratulations again!

Faculty and Student News

2026 Spring Research Conference



Pictured (L-R): Leanna Collins, Dr. Dan Kissinger



Pictured: Aaron VanDyke



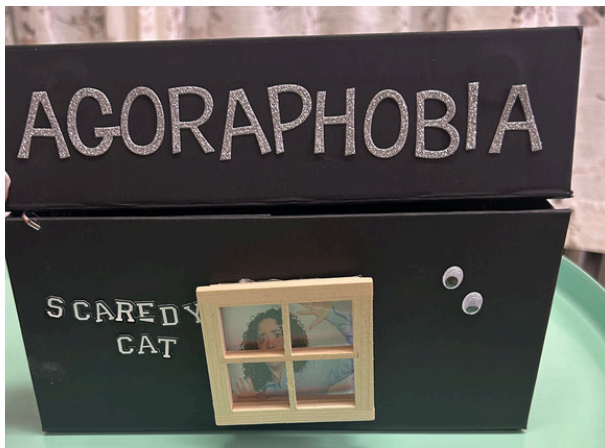
Pictured (L-R): Desiree Hausam, Dr. Andrea Fifield

The School of Health Sciences hosted its annual Spring 2026 Research Conference, celebrating student research under the theme Innovation in Science, Health, and Wellness. Undergraduate and graduate students from diverse programs—including Biology, Chemistry, Nursing, Psychology, Counseling, Physician Assistant Studies, Equestrian Studies, and Women in STEM—shared their work across campus.

Students from our program (Leanna Collins, Desiree Hausam, and Aaron VanDyke) participated sharing their research during the conference.

Learning Through Experience

Law & Ethics Class



In Dr. Irvin's Law and Ethics class, students created stigma boxes representing DSM-5 mental health diagnoses. Through this hands-on project, they explored the symptoms, challenges, and stigmas associated with each disorder, gaining a deeper understanding of the impact stigma has on individuals and communities. The experience reinforced the vital role clinicians play in promoting awareness, compassion, and advocacy, demonstrating how learning by doing can strengthen understanding and inspire meaningful change.

Awards and Recognitions

Congratulations to our **Outstanding Student Award** winners!



Pictured (L-R): Kaylee Parker, Dr. Kissinger, Dr. Fifield, & Brandon Cooper

Brandon Cooper (CMHC) & Kaylee Parker (SC)

We are proud to announce the 2026 recipient of the Outstanding School Counseling (SC) student award and the Clinical Mental Health Counseling (CMHC) student award. The winners of the SC and CMHC outstanding student awards are selected by Counseling faculty. Congratulations to Kaylee Parker (Outstanding SC student award recipient) and Brandon Cooper (Outstanding CMHC student award recipient!)

★ Welcome Fall 2026 Cohort! ★



Molly Campbell

NOT
PICTURED:

Amber Buckner

Morgan

Middleton

Sage Miller

Maggie Morhaus

Sara Ribaudo

Rebekah

Robertson

Lauren Sawyer

Bridgett Sissel



Kathryn Neal



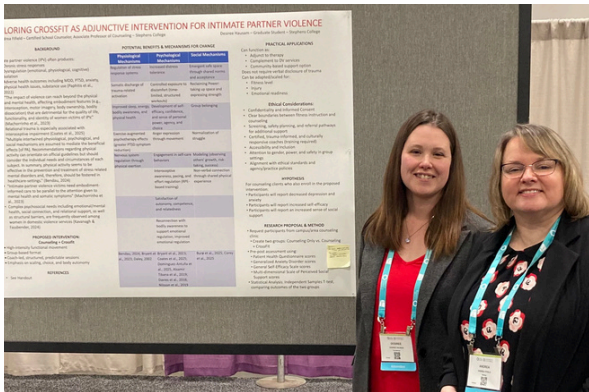
Hayley Nichols



Hannah York

Conference Experiences

American Counseling Association National Conference - Columbus, Ohio



Pictured (L-R): Desiree Hausam & Dr. Andrea Fifield



Pictured (L-R): Dr. Gerald Corey, Desiree Hausam, & Dr. John Sommers-Flanagan

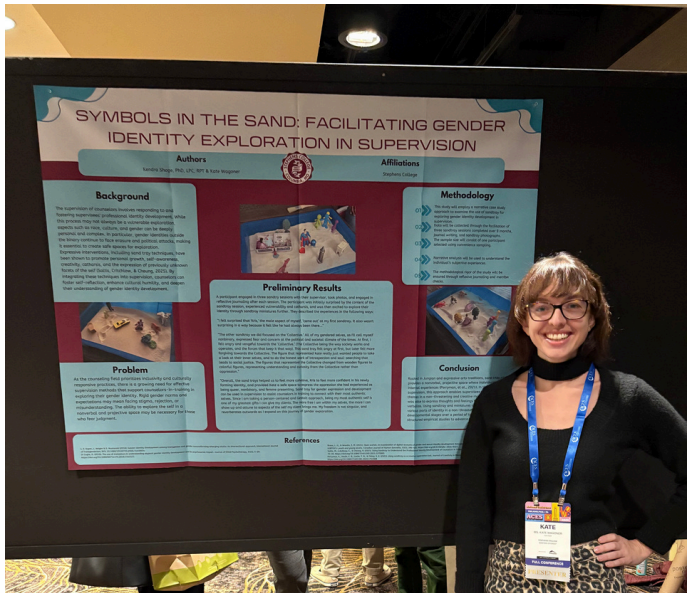
Stephens College Counseling faculty Dr. Andrea Fifield and graduate student, Desiree Hausam presented a poster at the 2026 American Counseling Association National Conference at the Greater Columbus Convention Center. Their session, “Exploring CrossFit as Adjunctive Intervention for Intimate Partner Violence,” examined potential benefits and mechanisms for change of counseling and crossfit. In addition to attending several educational sessions and connecting with other counseling professionals, Desiree and Dr. Fifield had the opportunity to meet luminaries in the counseling profession, including Dr. Gerald Corey and Dr. John Sommers-Flanagan!

Conference Experiences

Association for Counselor Education & Supervision conference (ACES) -Philadelphia, PA



Pictured (L-R): Dr. Kendra Shoge & Kate Wagoner



Kate Wagoner

Assistant Professor Dr. Kendra Shoge and CMHC master's student Kate Wagoner presented "Symbols in the Sand: Facilitating Gender Identity Exploration in Supervision" at the 2025 Association for Counselor Education & Supervision conference (ACES) in Philadelphia, PA.

Dr. Shoge also presented a seminar titled Safe Spaces, Brave Conversations: Navigating Fear, Division, and Uncertainty in Counselor Education and Supervision



Congrats to our Graduates!

Spring 2026 Graduates



Pictured (L-R): Ashley Lopez, Brandon Cooper, Alisa Newbold, Shannon Beck, Kailee Kanell, Abigail Hoer, Camille Townson, Amber Barringer, and Kaylee Parker

Fall 2025 Graduates



Pictured (L-R): Nancy Wright, Cassie Martin, Mary Leibovich, Ursula Sickman-Smith, and Catherine McNeely

Happy Pride!

SCCP Celebrates Mid-MO Pride Fest



Pictured: (L-R) Amara Reddick, Dr. Kissinger, Jennifer Mihalevich, Dr. Irvin, & Shana Nunn



Pictured: (L-R) Drs. Kissinger, Irvin, Fifield, & Shoge



Pictured: (M) Megan McBride,
(R) Alyssa Harker



The Stephens Counseling Program was proud to be part of Mid-MO Pride Fest 2025! 💜 Visitors participated in our Leaf Activity by sharing messages of encouragement, Pride-affirming words, and mental health affirmations on our Tree of Pride & Wellness. Guests were also invited to take messages that resonated with them. We are excited to share that our tent theme, “Rooted in Pride, Growing in Wellness,” won the award for Best Tent Theme! A heartfelt thank-you to our program volunteers for your time, donations, and continued support.

HOLIDAY AND END-OF-SEMESTER POTLUCK



On December 11, students and faculty gathered at Dudley Hall to celebrate the end of the Fall 2025 semester. The event brought together students, faculty, and their loved ones for an evening of food, games, and connection.

Students connected with peers from other cohorts, shared experiences, and enjoyed a festive White Elephant gift exchange. The celebration was a wonderful opportunity to recognize the hard work of our students while emphasizing the importance of community and work-life balance.

Equine-Assisted Learning Workshop



Pictured (L-R): Madelyn Hicks, Leanna Collins, Deniz Tuncer, Sara Linde-Patel, Alyssa Harker, Mary Pena, Camille Townson, Amber Barringer, & Desiree Hausam

The Graduate Counseling Program participated in an experiential Equine-Assisted Learning (EAL) workshop at the Stephens College Equestrian Center, led by Sara Linde-Patel, Director of the Equine program. Through hands-on activities with horses, students explored non-verbal communication, leadership, relationship dynamics, and emotional awareness while gaining insight into EAL's applications in counseling and other helping professions. The workshop highlighted the power of experiential learning and the personal and professional growth that can emerge through the horse-human connection.

Thank you, Sara, for sharing your equine knowledge and expertise with us! We loved learning and spending time with the horses (and Vincent Van Goat)!



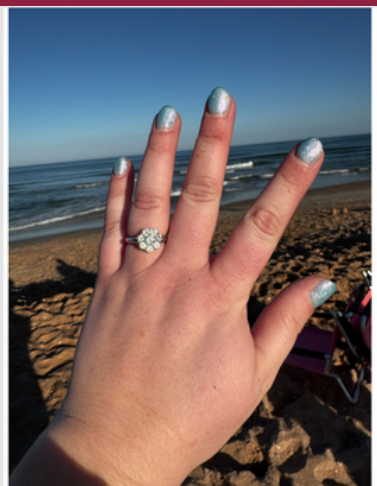
Celebrations



We're excited to celebrate some wonderful personal milestones! Please join us in congratulating these individuals on their recent engagements. We're so happy for you and wish you all the best in this exciting new chapter.



Madelyn Hicks and her partner rang in the new year with an engagement in January 2026.



Rebecca Cramer and her partner, Mike, celebrated their 7-year anniversary in November 2025 with a special engagement.





Celebrations



Anna Kammeyer and her partner, Cole, are engaged and excitedly planning their wedding for September 26, 2026.



Megan McBride and her partner, Colin, are happily engaged and looking ahead to their May 2027 wedding.

The Self-Care Spot



**“Rest Is Not a
Reward. Rest Is a
Requirement.”
– Anonymous**

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF WHILE YOU PURSUE YOUR GOALS

Brief Message:

Graduate school offers many opportunities while also bringing stress and pressure. The pace is intense, and expectations are high. Without self-care, burnout can develop quickly. Taking time for yourself supports focus, health, and balance throughout your journey.

Self-Care Tips for Grad Students:

- Set realistic expectations – You don’t have to do everything perfectly.
- Take breaks without guilt – Rest is part of being productive.
- Talk it out – Share your feelings with friends, mentors, or peers.
- Schedule personal time just like you schedule class or research time.
- Limit caffeine and remember to fuel your body properly.
- Do something you enjoy outside of school at least once a week.
- Break big tasks into smaller steps to avoid feeling overwhelmed.
- Digital Detox: Unplug for a few hours to give your mind space to reset.
- Remind yourself why you started when things feel hard.

Taking care of yourself is not a luxury; it is a key to long-term success.

Upcoming Events

Missouri Suicide Prevention Conference

- July 17, 2025 • Holiday Inn Executive Center, Columbia, MO
- <https://www.mospn.org/conference>

Missouri Behavioral Health Conference

- September 16–18, 2026 • Hyatt Regency Downtown, St. Louis, MO
- <https://www.mobhc.org/missouri-behavioral-health-conferencefacebook.com+13mobhc.org+13mobhc.org+13>

Missouri Mental Health Counselors Association Annual Conference

- October 22-24, 2026 • Old Kinderhook Resort, Camdenton, MO
- Website: <https://www.mmhca.com/training-events/2025-annual-conference>

Missouri School Counselor Association Fall Conference

- November 8-10, 2026 • St. Charles Convention Center, St. Charles, MO
- <https://www.moschoolcounselor.org/2025-fall-conferencefacebook.com+9moschoolcounselor.org+9moschoolcounselor.org+9moschoolcounselor.org+4moschoolcounselor.org+4facebook.com+4>

NAMIcon 2027

- June 8-11, 2027, Washington, D.C.
- <https://events.nami.org/namicon/>

Have photos or news to share?

Send your photos, updates, or achievements to **snunn@stephens.edu** for a chance to appear in the next edition of The Focal Point and on social media!

Upcoming Events

NCACES 2026 Conference

- October 15–17, 2026 • Des Moines, IA
- <https://www.ncaces.net/ncaces-conference>

ACES National Conference 2027

- (exact dates TBD)
- <https://acesonline.net/aces-national-conference/>

SACES 2026 Conference

- November 5–7, 2026 • Louisville, KY
- <https://saces.wildapricot.org/conferencequilltherapynotes.com+7motreatmentcourts.org+7moschoolcounselor.org+7en.wikipedia.org>

ACA Conference & Expo 2027

- March 11–13, 2027 • Portland, Oregon
- Website: <https://www.counseling.org/events-education/conferencesmohealthcare.com+12mmhca.com+12mobhc.org+12quilltherapynotes.com>

ASCA Annual Conference 2027

- July 17–20, 2027 • Columbus, Ohio (in-person & virtual)
- <https://ascaconferences.org/motreatmentcourts.org+2moschoolcounselor.org+2mopqc.org+2>

Law & Ethics in Counseling Conference 2026

- February 23–26, 2027 • Hybrid (New Orleans & virtual)
- <https://uhcno.edu/academics/ways-to-learn/continuing-education.phpmmhca.com+1facebook.com+1mobhc.org>



Stephens College

Stephens College
School of Health Sciences
Counseling Department