

Dear Stakeholders,

2020-2021 has been a year fraught with COVID-19 uncertainty and jaw-dropping change with no advance warning. With an abrupt pivot to virtual learning and telehealth therapy, the students and faculty have demonstrated great courage in the face of adversity, and we have successfully overcome basic challenges to continued learning and practice, and still sponsored special annual events via Zoom. In January 2021, our program will make every effort to return to its traditionally seated classes where lockdowns are not mandatory or required for safety.

On our Charlotte Campus and Raleigh/Durham Campus respectively, we welcomed Dr. Michelle Cawn from UNC Charlotte as our “visiting professor” for at least (1) year, and Dr. Travis Johnson from Michigan State University as Clinic Director. Congratulations also to Dr. Sarah Wolford who was promoted to Clinic Director on the Charlotte Campus, and Dr. Robert Cox who was promoted to Director of the Misenheimer Counseling Services and Wellness Center on the undergraduate campus. We are so very fortunate to have such talented faculty on board!

The Charlotte Campus formally entered their year of Eligibility for Accreditation Renewal, and Dr. Williams (RDU Site Director) and Dr. Wilkie (Founding Program Director) submitted the Eligibility Criterion Narrative on October 1, 2020. It has been accepted with full sufficiency. The official self-study is due on October 1, 2021.

With an unexpected and sudden reduction in undergraduate enrollment due to COVID-19 impact and the decision for many students to take a gap year from classes, the President of Pfeiffer and its Board of Trustees voted to consolidate its properties and close the Raleigh/Durham Campus. Though the broader administrative decision has been an extremely difficult one for both students and faculty, our program and the University are committed to a trusted teach-out process and to the full support of our students as they move towards their subsequent timely graduation. The teach-out process is guided by requirements of both our regional and program accrediting bodies, SACSCOC and COAMFTE respectively. Dr. Williams and Dr. Wilkie will be sending an email letter to both current students and alumni indicating the plan for the final year of operation and will identify the process for accessing student records after the Raleigh/Durham Campus closure. Please note: All student academic records, including internship documentation, will be housed in the Program Director’s office indefinitely on the Charlotte Campus. Dr. Williams and Dr. Johnson will also serve as a direct scaffold for our RDU students until the program closes in early August, 2022.

During recent surveys administered during the Fall semester, all students reported they were pleased by the enlarged Charlotte classroom space on the 2nd floor, most indicated they were grateful that the clinic directors, program/site directors, and clinic coordinator had trained and prepared them for teletherapy, and most indicated they were pleased that the COVID lockdowns had not prevented them from anticipated conferment. Even small hooding ceremonies for graduates scheduled every semester had served in the place of a university wide graduation, and celebrated their perseverance and outstanding accomplishments. By the

very nature of what we do as therapists, the students were challenged by abrupt change and disappointment, but successfully overcame the obstacles.

Other feedback focused on continued opportunities to integrate diversity and inclusivity across the curriculum through diversity dialogues and focus groups. A call for a more diverse faculty was swiftly achieved on the Raleigh/Durham Campus, and continues to be a somewhat successful goal for the Charlotte Campus as we join together and integrate the students and faculty from both campuses for monthly faculty meetings, special events, and alternative mock session hours and mock-a-thons. The most disappointing changes in the Charlotte Campus evolved around the removal of the library facilities, research training, and open access to textbooks and video resources. The plan in place is the move of select library books to the second floor and the hopeful return of a librarian to resume appropriate services to all graduate students. The electronic Library Finder and Interlibrary Exchange is currently their only option.

A Delta Kappa Honor Society Induction and scheduled Alumni Mini-Conference via Zoom are plans for late April. The Mini-Conference is intended to be an annual opportunity to showcase our Pfeiffer MMFT Alums who are making a difference in their communities with innovative ideas, techniques, and creative therapies.

Despite the varied and numerous challenges that have presented due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have continued to provide the necessary continuity and structure to enable students to swiftly accommodate our shared experience and changing landscape. As therapists, we do not aspire to achieve “normal” but seek ways to encourage health in all aspects of life and embrace a different way to engage. We know our lives will not simply go back to what it looked like prior to the onset of COVID-19. In the midst of recalibrating, our desire is to promote a healthy yet different way to navigate and accomplish both the academic and experiential outcomes of our program while dually managing the unforeseen aspects of living with COVID-19.

Best Wishes for a Safe and Healthy Spring!!

Dr. Susan Wilkie & Dr. Isha Williams

**Susan B. Wilkie McHale, PhD | Founding Director of Marriage & Family Therapy
Professor, LMFT, LCMHC, AAMFT Approved Supervisor, LCMHC Approved Supervisor
www.pfeiffer.edu | susan.wilkie@pfeiffer.edu www.pfeiffer.edu/mmft**

**Isha D. Williams, PhD, LMFT, AAMFT Approved Supervisor
Site Director and Assistant Professor
isha.williams@pfeiffer.edu**

