

Commitment to Christ-Centered Diversity

Toccoa Falls College (TFC) is a non-profit, Christian liberal arts college accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)¹ and affiliated with the Christian and Missionary Alliance (C&MA).² As a collegiate, faith-based institution informed by our Christian mission and identity, we believe that all people are created in the image of God and deserve to be treated with the utmost respect in keeping with both Christian conviction and applicable laws governing higher education.³ Further, we seek to reflect the global diversity of those whom Christ has called from every tribe, nation, people, and language on earth.⁴ In accordance with the C&MA's guiding mission—which is to know Jesus Christ; exalt Him as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, and Coming King; and complete His Great Commission⁵—we likewise seek to reflect and advance the cause of justice which is central to Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God and, to that end, be a grace-filled, Christ-centered learning community that embodies love, kindness, integrity, fidelity, and respect for one another.

Christ-Centered Diversity and MFT

The Graduate Studies program at TFC strives to be a community which embodies core values of Representation, Cultural Competence, Humility, and Responsible Advocacy in keeping with the teachings of Jesus and the deepest convictions of Christian charity and mission. These values are exhibited in the facilitation of our Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy program:

Representation

Our commitment to Christ-centered diversity is a commitment to striving to reflect the global diversity of God's kingdom, and ensures people from across ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic experiences are welcomed into our community so their voices can be heard, perspectives considered, and people respected. The diversity of our students, faculty, and staff reflects commitment to this value. Additionally, we ensure that students who are being trained in our program are understanding of the needs and perspectives of clients who may or may not reflect their own backgrounds or perspectives, and train students to be clinicians who are able to provide competent care in keeping with legal and ethical standards and requirements.

Faith integration: By committing to representation we can share in one another's humanity as Jesus shared in our collective humanity (Hebrews 2:14-15, 5:7).

Cultural Competency

Students are trained with a commitment to practice ethically and maintain cultural competence. Learning about differences, how experiences and backgrounds shape perspective and reality, and implicit biases which can shape our assumptions are all necessary parts of self-reflection and are

¹<https://tfc.edu/about/accreditation/#:~:text=Toccoa%20Falls%20College%20is%20accredited,%2C%20baccalaureate%2C%20and%20masters%20degrees.>

² <https://tfc.edu/about/christian-missionary-alliance/>.

³ Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27; Romans 13:1-7.

⁴ Matthew 28:18-20; Galatians 3:28; Revelation 7:9-10.

⁵ See the "C&MA Mission and Objectives" at <https://cdn.cmalliance.org/wordpress/cmalliance/Mission-and-Objectives.pdf>.

essential components for practicing empathy towards others. Empathy, in turn, is essential for clinicians to be able to help their clients, especially people representing backgrounds and demographics different from those of the clinician, to be heard, included, respected, understood, and genuinely cared for within the counseling relationship. This is a value which is incorporated into several places within the MFT curriculum. Faculty are also committed to ongoing training in this area.

Faith integration: By encouraging cultural competency, we break down barriers to understanding and encourage peace and reconciliation among people as Christ has broken barriers to reconcile us to God (Galatians 3:28).

Humility

A willingness to have one's biases and assumptions challenged while remaining curious and open to divergent perspectives is necessary for marriage and family therapists who must understand, and find validity in, divergent perspectives inside relationships and family systems.

Faith integration: By encouraging humility, we encourage ourselves and our students to model the humility of Christ (Philippians 2:6-8; 1 Peter 3:8).

Responsible Advocacy

In order to promote healing among populations and people who have experienced trauma, oppression, or marginalization, we believe that it is the responsibility of clinicians, and especially those who have not experienced such pain, to be intentional about creating space for people with such lived experiences to authentically and safely share those experiences, and that clinicians should, in turn, listen curiously and acknowledge and validate them as people without exhibiting either defensiveness or an inappropriately judgmental posture. Further, in keeping with our identity as a Christ-centered institution, we believe it is our responsibility to serve and advocate for oppressed, marginalized, and persecuted people across the world and bring God's light and healing to those most in need.

Faith integration: By taking responsibility and advocating for suffering people, we seek to fulfill Christ's mandate that his followers be salt and light—a preserving, healing, and life-giving people in this world (Matthew 5:13-16, 25:40-45).