

# One University, Many Paths

WITH 27,000 STUDENTS and 10 regional campuses, Nova Southeastern University is the ninth largest not-for-profit independent university in the United States. Based in Fort Lauderdale–Davie, Florida, Nova is classified as a research university with “high research activity” by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and is one of only 37 universities nationwide to be awarded Carnegie’s Community Engagement Classification. Through five decades of explosive growth, the university has acquired a reputation for academic excellence and innovation. Nova takes pride in its unique approach to education, offering a nurturing atmosphere in the context of a forward-thinking university with an array of traditional and nontraditional learning opportunities. Among the most distinguished offerings are those in the social sciences, and Dr. Ayala Winer, director of business development, family therapist, and mental health counselor, describes the distinct perspectives available to students through the Center for Psychological Studies and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

## What pathways does NSU offer to practice counseling?

Students seeking a graduate degree in the helping professions can choose between two schools of thought: One is in Psychology; the other, in Marriage and Family Therapy.

## How are they different?

Marriage and Family Therapists believe individuals should be considered in context. In addition to individual development and personality, relationships at home, school, work, and the larger culture are explored. As fully qualified mental health professionals, MFTs diagnose and perform assessments; they also consider language, narratives, and solutions. Therapists collaborate with clients to explore different possibilities and outcomes. The focus is on the client’s strengths. NSU offers both a master’s and a doctoral degree in MFT.

## And Psychology?

We offer a Master’s in Mental Health Counseling, a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology (Psy.D.), and a Doctorate in Psychology (Ph.D.), and what unites their approach is an emphasis on the diagnosis of problems and holistic wellness, and incorporation of a developmental approach into the treatment plan. Both counselors and psychologists listen to the symptoms a client experiences, form a diagnosis, and develop a treatment plan to best address the issues. Neuropsychological assessments may be administered to help clarify the diagnosis. The focus is a wellness model to decrease the client’s symptoms and prevent dysfunction.

## How do students choose?

Students often ask, “What is the difference between a licensed marriage and family therapist, a licensed psychologist, and a licensed mental health counselor?” I answer by citing the difference between an M.D., or medical doctor, and a D.O., or doctor of osteopathy. The medical route to a patient seeing an M.D. for stomach pain would be an examination of the symptoms presented to form a diagnosis and establish a treatment plan. The D.O. ap-



Dr. Ayala Winer

proach is more holistic and includes an exploration of what else is happening within and around the affected area, as one body organ does not exist independently of the others.

## What do the different courses of study entail?

The Master’s Degree in Mental Health Counseling takes about two and a half years to complete. It is offered in different formats and locations—in a traditional format on the main campus, a weekend format at NSU’s regional campuses, and

an online format. The Psy.D. and Ph.D. programs in psychology are both based on the practitioner-informed-by-science model. Students are taught the core knowledge areas of psychology and trained to provide evidence-based assessment, intervention, and consultation services across a full range of populations. Both are full-time, on-campus programs with residency requirements. They typically require four years of coursework and a year of internship.

## What about the MFT degrees?

The master’s takes under two years and consists of coursework and direct supervision of clinical practice, including live supervision. It is offered on our main campus and is the only accredited MFT program in the state of Florida. The Doctorate in Marriage and Family (D.M.F.T.) and the Doctorate of Philosophy in Marriage and Family (Ph.D.) are designed for individuals holding a master’s degree. The programs integrate systemically oriented theory and clinical practice, language, and thinking systems.

## What advice do you give to prospective students?

When students ask which educational journey to embark on, I advise them to research both approaches, talk to professionals in both areas, and examine which fits better with their set of values and beliefs. It is your world view, your own values and beliefs that should guide the path you choose. Ultimately all paths in the helping professions lead to improving people’s lives and making the world a better place.



# PURSUE A REWARDING CAREER

At NSU, we want to engage the best minds across disciplines and seek solutions to contemporary and emerging challenges in the global community through research, training, and practice. We invite you to investigate what we have to offer and to imagine your future in our learning community.

## NSU’s Marriage and Family Therapy Programs

- The M.S. in Family Therapy Program is the only COAMFTE-accredited master’s degree program in Florida.
- The Doctor of Marriage and Family Therapy (D.M.F.T.) degree is an advanced practitioner-oriented terminal degree.
- The Ph.D. in Family Therapy degree is a practitioner-oriented degree with emphasis in research.
- Students receive clinical training and experience at the Brief Therapy Institute (BTI), NSU’s on-site family therapy clinic.

## NSU’s Psychology Programs

- The M.S. in Mental Health Counseling program trains students to work in settings that include community, state, and private mental health and human services agencies.
- The Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology is APA accredited and based on a scientist-practitioner training model.
- The APA-accredited Psy.D. in Clinical Psychology is designed to offer academic, practicum, internship, and research experience that is directly relevant to the practitioner, while retaining the important scientific base upon which professional competence and knowledge rest.



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