1) Why study in UT’s Mental Health Counseling Program?
Answer: The top reason would be that you have a passion for deep therapeutic connections and want to develop to be the very best counselor possible for persons in need. Strengths within the program include:
- Nationally and internationally known faculty who are passionate about your development and the contributions you will make to helping persons in need and the counseling field
- A focus on the development of the person of each counselor, along with developing strong counselor skills and knowledge base
- High standards and an experiential approach to learning
- Particular strengths in educating counselors to work with troubled children, including specialized education and internships in play therapy for interested students, within a curriculum and range of faculty expertise that encompasses counseling across all ages and work settings
- Accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Program (CACREP), which helps ensure high standards as well as the portability and path to licensure from your degree.

2) What is the job outlook in the mental health counseling field?
Answer: According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook overall employment of counselors is expected to grow faster than the average for all occupations. The Bureau of Labor Statistics recently listed mental health counseling as among fastest growing occupations. Recent trends suggest particular areas of job opportunities within mental health counseling services for troubled children and youth. Our graduates work in agencies and practices serving adolescents, children, adults, and families throughout our region and the country, such as outpatient mental health clinics, residential treatment centers, private practices, and mental health counseling programs in schools.

3) How does one apply?
Answer: All applications begin with the UT Graduate School at the Graduate Admissions page (look for the New Applicants link on the left side of the page). Within the application, you will be asked to select your program of interest. Select the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program. This selection will guide you to the input we need to get to know you as an applicant and will route your application materials to us. Submit your application materials by February 1st. It may help you to begin your application early, in case you need extra time to obtain items such as reference forms. Reference forms and all application materials are submitted electronically.

4) What are the minimum scores required for admissions?
Answer: Many of our applicants have much higher than average GRE scores. Yet, while high GRE and GPA scores are very good indicators of ability to excel in graduate study, they are only
one indicator of ability to become an excellent counselor. Therefore, GRE and GPA scores are only one factor in our admissions decisions – we strive to get to know the whole person of each applicant.

We do not use an absolute minimum GRE score. We rarely accept applicants with scores that are significantly below average (~ 40th percentile). And if an applicant’s score is below average, we look carefully through his or her application materials to find other strong evidence of academic potential.

Similarly, most of our applicants have quite high GPAs. And we do not use a minimum GPA, but certainly do consider GPA in discerning likely academic potential. In some cases, applicants have had a semester or two with a low GPA, yet finished with consistent semesters of high GPAs. In such cases, applicants are welcome to explain what happened and ask us to consider her or his GPA from the final years of undergraduate study.

5) What aspect of the application is most important for admission?
Answer: All aspects of our application materials are weighted equally - Our faculty members consider the whole person of each applicant as much as possible. So, for example, you will notice that we have applicants attempt a few counseling like tasks. This is not because we expect our applicants to already have developed counseling skills. Rather, this is one of our efforts to get to know the persons of our applicants (i.e., what do these aspects of the application, along with all other aspects, suggest about the applicant’s fit with the program, self-development, natural tendencies, and likelihood of excelling as a counselor).

6) Are particular undergraduate major's required?
Answer: No. Our students come from a wide variety of educational backgrounds, recently ranging from psychology and social work to education, business, communications, art, anthropology, engineering, and others. This range of undergraduate backgrounds brings diversity of perspectives to our learning community. And because of the personal development needed to become a counselor, there are very few undergraduate counseling majors in the country.

7) If an applicant is not accepted, does that mean that he or she may not become an excellent counselor?
Answer: Absolutely not! Every year we have many more excellent applicants than we can accept. We keep the number of students in our program quite small in order to give each student the time, attention and guidance that she or he needs and deserves. Therefore, we only accept the small number of students each year that our faculty members see as having the very greatest potential for excellence and fit for the program.

8) How many students are admitted each year and how many usually apply?
Answer: Most years we admit 10-15 students, depending on available openings. Most years we have 50-80 applicants. So, please understand that acceptance is competitive and that faculty members have to make very difficult decisions to keep to our faculty-student ratio low. But also please don’t let that discourage you from applying – as you strive to let us know you, we may see the qualities in you that help you rise above the other highly qualified applicants.
9) If an applicant is not accepted, does he or she have alternatives?
Answer: Yes. You may improve your readiness and apply again. Typical areas to improve include counseling related work or life experience, as well as improved GRE and GPA. Also, different counseling programs have different emphases. Therefore, you may apply to other programs that may see you as a better fit.

10) If an applicant is not accepted the first time and wants to improve her or his application, what is the most likely area for improvement?
Answer: Because we make our admissions decisions as a faculty group and each member may emphasize different things, it is not possible to say why an individual applicant did not gain admission. However, we often have applicants that are seen as having excellent potential, but as having less life and work experience or personal maturity than others. Therefore, often an applicant who does not gain acceptance the first time applying can take time to seek counseling related work or even volunteer experience, then reapply as a stronger and more ready applicant.

11) When are applications due?
Answer: February 1.

12) When are admissions decisions made or completed?
Answer: We generally send out offers to admit by mid-March. There can be delays due to faculty travel or other factors. We request an acceptance or commitment in response to our offer to admit within two weeks from those to whom we offer acceptance.

We also maintain a waiting list of persons that faculty really hoped to accept, but who were not at the very top of our list. We offer acceptance to these applicants in prioritized order as soon as we know that we have an additional opening (e.g., one of our initially accepted applicants does not commit). These final acceptances are concluded by mid-April.

13) Is an interview required?
Answer: We interview as many as possible of our top applicants. Because many of our applicants are from well outside of our home region, interviews are conducted through Google Video Chat and are usually about 30 minutes in length. See the additional notes at the end of this Q & A for more information on this process.

14) Is it possible to meet with faculty prior to applying?
Answer: Yes. You may contact program coordinator, Dr. Jeff Cochran. He or other faculty members will meet in-person or by phone with potential applicants as needed.

15) May I take courses prior to acceptance (i.e., to decide if this is really what I want)?
Answer: You may take up to three courses as a non-degree student. Please do not take more than three in order to not get too far along in the program without the oversight provided to admitted students, without advisor guidance, and before becoming too invested without knowing if you will be accepted.
16) May I apply to start in any semester?
   **Answer:** No. Faculty members carefully review applications for the Clinical Mental Health Counseling Program once per year, with applications due February 1. From this review, accepted students may begin their studies in the summer or fall semester.

17) How long is the program?
   **Answer:** If full-time, the program is 2.5 years or two academic years, plus three summers (the summer before first fall, middle summer, and summer after last spring).

18) How do students in the program normally afford graduate studies?
   **Answer:** Most of our students pay for their graduate studies through combinations of traditional financial aid and part or full-time work. Our faculty members understand that graduate studies can be very difficult to afford. We work to keep costs low and assist our students with this difficulty in every way possible. Regrettably, there is very little financial aid within our control. We are occasionally able to provide students with special scholarships or assistantships. When this becomes possible, faculty advisors contact individual students to apply. Also, we frequently forward notices of open assistantships on campus to our students, then support their applications for these opportunities as requested.

19) Is it possible to study full-time or part-time?
   **Answer:** Yes. Most of our students study full-time. However, because we are aware of the difficulties of affording graduate study, we work to assist students who choose to work full-time and study part-time to work out plans of study that allow their needed work time. Many courses are offered in late afternoons, which helps accommodate many work schedules. However, some courses are only available during the day. In either case, work place flexibility will be required. The primary conflict with full-time work usually comes during practicum and internship. Practicum is about eight hours per week at a counseling setting for one semester. Internship is 20+ hours per week at a counseling setting for a calendar year. Some students are able to continue a flexible work schedule during practicum. The needs of most internship placements make full-time work impossible.

20) Do the faculty members of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs handle admissions decisions jointly?
   **Answer:** Yes. You may note that the Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling programs share core curriculum, faculty, and other resources. Therefore, we also use the same application materials and make our primary admissions decisions together.

**Interview Procedures for the Mental Health Counseling and School Counseling Programs**
The faculty of the mental health counseling and school counseling programs at the University of Tennessee take pride in our students, our students’ professional development, and the contributions our graduates make to the profession as practitioners. We also believe it is essential for students to be aware of our program standards, expectations, and procedures to determine if there is a good fit between program qualities and student personality. Therefore, faculty committees interview top applicants from our initial review of application materials. Because many of our applicants apply from significant distances, our interviews are conducted
electronically through Google Gmail Video Chat.

Google is freely available and compatible with both PCs and MACs. If asked to interview and you do not already have a Gmail account, you will need to create one. If you do not have a computer that is compatible with this service you will need to locate a computer to use for the interview. For example, most libraries have accessible computers, but you will need to find a place that is quiet, free of distractions, and available at the time you are scheduled to interview. If selected to interview, expect to receive a call to schedule your interview in the second or third week of February, with your interview to take place two weeks later.

To Set-up Google Video Chat/Gmail account:
1. Go to: http://mail.google.com/mail/signup
2. Before entering the pertinent information necessary to obtain an account, check the availability of your desired Login Name.
3. Once you’ve completed the registration and have obtained an account, download the Google Chat plug-in for your browser, http://www.google.com/chat/video.

To Interview:
• We will need your Gmail Login Name and we will call you at the designated time. When you hear the computer phone ringing, click on the “answer” button and a video screen will appear in which you can view us and we will be able to see you.
• For further information, here’s a link to Google’s video tutorial, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFGJRfoK9xQ