EXPERIENCE-DRIVEN LEARNING

The Unified Clinics engages students from WMU through practicum, clinical fieldwork, student jobs and internships. Below are examples of experience-driven learning opportunities the clinics have to offer.

- All Speech, Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy undergraduate and graduate students have a semester long fieldwork experience within the Charles Van Riper Language, Speech and Hearing Clinic or Marion R. Spear Occupational Therapy Clinic.
- The Department of Psychology doctoral students have opportunities for practicum and specialized training in clinical and research skills.
- Behavioral Health Services also serves as a training site for graduate level interns in health and human services who provide treatment services under the supervision of the clinical director.
- Audiology graduate student clinicians gain experience providing services under the direct supervision of clinical faculty members.
- Music Therapy services are provided by qualified graduate or undergraduate music therapy students under the supervision of Board-Certified Music Therapists.

History of the Unified Clinics

Established in 1995, The Unified Clinics are an inter-university collaboration that is both an educational and community asset. All services have grown in direct response to an identified community need. The Unified Clinics have the ability to meet very unique community needs due to the availability of a broad range of clinical faculty and many experts in their fields.

Vision

The Western Michigan University Unified Clinics will be recognized as a local, state and national leader in health and human services delivery through professional education, interdisciplinary and best practices research, employee commitment, human diversity focus, technology, innovation, effective partnerships and responsive community service.
**Geographic area served**

The Unified Clinics primarily serve a large portion of Southwest Michigan, the Kalamazoo area and surrounding counties. Additionally, available telehealth services enable Unified Clinics to extend their reach beyond the Kalamazoo area.

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**WMU students engage with local Kalamazoo school**

Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy, and Public Health students from WMU hosted the 2nd annual career fair at Northeastern Elementary School for 4th and 5th grade students. The Resiliency Center has worked closely with the school for the last two years to provide services to both the students and teachers.

The Western Michigan University Resiliency Center for Families and Children (RCFC) was established in 2020 to address the multifaceted needs of those experiencing trauma, toxic stress, chronic disability, neurodevelopmental disorders or addictions. RCFC has three components:

- **Service** - Resiliency Center for Assessment and Treatment
- **Research** - Qualitative studies in the areas of trauma assessment, caregiver co-regulation and sensory processing
- **Training** - Providing professional development and WMU student training

An estimated 150 students have had experience-driven learning in the Unified clinics this year. WMU students learning in the clinics are from:

- Occupational Therapy
- Speech-Language Pathology
- Social Work
- Audiology
- WMed
- Music Therapy
- Psychology

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Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy and Public Health students engaging in experience-driven learning at Northeastern Elementary School.
Therapy Dog Clinic receives grant

The Therapy Dog Clinic, part of the Unified Clinics at WMU, has received a generous grant in excess of $22,000. The Kalamazoo Community Foundation granted the funds for continued services to support placing WMU therapy dogs, Sunny, Oreo and Poppy, into outpatient therapy and occupational therapy services being provided to Kalamazoo County youth at our facility. This is an important step forward in maintaining the unique, holistic, and trauma-informed services available at Western Michigan University.

Music Therapy students practice skills at the Unified Clinics

At the Unified Clinics, WMU Music therapy students are finding their rhythm as they fine tune their clinical skills through training in real-world experiences. As a degree requirement, students at the practicum level are assigned to work with the same client(s) for an entire semester where they apply their theoretical knowledge and musical training to address non-musical goals (or musical goals when appropriate). Under the guidance of experienced board-certified professionals, students develop music-based treatment plans utilizing assessment outcomes and provide sessions designed with a variety of evidence-based techniques to meet the diverse needs of each individual and are created to involve the use of voice (singing), various instruments, songs and the intentional use of the elements of music.

Whether they are treating a child with ASD to increase social connection through engaging songs, or an older adult to improve physical function, communication and cognition after a stroke through songwriting, playing instruments or singing, students learn quickly that through a collaborative effort they cultivate empathy, creativity and adaptability which are essential skills in becoming a trained professional in the field of music therapy. Music therapy students cherish the experience-driven learning and connections they make with their clients at the unified clinics and witness firsthand the profound impact music can have on physical, emotional, communicative and cognitive well-being.

NOW HIRING

The Resiliency Center for Assessment and Treatment at Western Michigan University is hiring a Master-level Social Worker (LMSW). The position is both assessment and youth outpatient therapy. Great team with potential for growth.

wmujobs.org/postings/2365
Unified Clinics currently serve as an experience-driven learning hub for various College of Health and Human Sciences, College of Fine Arts and College of Arts and Sciences programs, including long-standing teaching clinics within both Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences and Occupational Therapy. Both the SLP and OT programs rely on the UC to provide students with real world clinical experiences where students bring their classroom knowledge of evidenced-based practices to work with clients with authentic health care needs. Students consistently cite their experience-driven learning at UC as the most impactful of their education and leave Western Michigan University with cutting edge skills in their fields.

Due to the escalating need for the expansion and advancement of technological capabilities for the Unified Clinics to maintain a state-of-the-art environment for student learning, clinic staff (Dr. Michelle Suarez, Kathy Rigley and Dr. Adriana Degani) wrote a proposal and were granted $50,000 in funding for a technology upgrade. WMU’s Experience-Driven Learning Venture Grants awarded the funds to the Unified Clinics project, “TechBoost: A technological infrastructure upgrade for experiential learning excellence at Unified Clinics.”

Specifically, enhanced infrastructure would support student education in tele-practice to prepare them to meet the needs of the marginalized communities that they will serve post-graduation (e.g. rural, chronically ill, immune-compromised). Also, technological expansion at the UC will provide the foundation for student participation in clinical research, elevating the clinics into a site that supports both clinical education and student research production.

Occasional Therapy students complete final competencies at Unified Clinics

Please join us in congratulating our second-year Occupational Therapy Doctorate Program students as they complete their final competencies at Unified Clinics before heading off to their Level II fieldwork. They will work full-time to gain experience in a clinic, hospital, school or community agency. We are so proud of our students who have worked with many people in the community.

Charles Hanks, OTD candidate demonstrates what he’s learned with Occupational Therapy department chair, Nancy Hock
Y-Mind cohort - reflection at the halfway point of the program

Three WMU graduate students and Y-Mind (Youth Mental Health Interprofessional Networking and Workforce Development) participants recently met to discuss their experiences with the program thus far. Molly Boyle, Occupational Therapy Doctorate program, Oluwasomidoyin Bello, Interdisciplinary Health and Sciences Ph.D program and Rebecca Adams, Speech-Language Pathology master's student all started the Y-Mind program together in January, 2024.

The mental and behavioral health of young people is a growing concern in the United States. WMU’s Resiliency Center for Families and Child (RCFC) took this as an opportunity to address these pressing issues with students from WMU’s College of Health and Human Services, School of Medicine and College of Arts and Sciences. The Y-MIND program aims to expand the mental health workforce and improve access to care for children and families in Michigan. Y-MIND prepares students for culturally responsive, interprofessional service in the field.

The Y-Mind participants specifically reflected on how the program has enhanced their learning. By having exposure to different students' perspectives, they have broadened their understanding of healthcare and equipped them to meet the demands of modern healthcare in respects to behavioral and mental health.

"The group discussions have been a blessing to learn other perspectives in relation to their discipline. The opportunity to strive towards a collective goal like the capstone has given me real-world experience with interacting with other professionals, therefore helping to build and increase my own professional development." said Molly Boyle, OTD student.

"It was so good for me to learn from young OTs, Physicians, Social Workers and Physical Therapists in the program," said Rebecca Adams, Speech-Language Pathology master's student.

"Overall, I found Y-Mind very impactful and effective, and I enjoyed it. It met beyond my expectations, and I learned a lot in the course. I look forward to applying the knowledge gained and integrating it into my routine practice, achieving my goals and sharing all I have learned in Nigeria. The program has good support structures in place for us to consider mental health, behavioral health, adverse childhood experiences and neurodiversity when seeing patients", said Oluwasomidoyin Bello, IHS Ph.D. student.

Feedback about Y-Mind was collectively positive among participants. Learning to work effectively in teams prepares students for real-world healthcare settings. It is imperative for students to expand their mental and behavioral health knowledge in order to promote resiliency, well-being and quality of life for young people and their families.
BHS intern finds success with experience-driven learning

Bobbie Smith was an intern with the WMU Behavioral Health Services Clinic, within the Unified Clinics in 2023-2024. She said, "My internship with the BHS team was foundational to the success that I've had thus far in my graduate program. The opportunity to observe and engage in real world practice, while studying the concepts and applications academically made the material exponentially more meaningful and impactful. The clinical staff at BHS is supportive, kind and knowledgeable. Their generosity of spirit is unmatched.

I was given the opportunity at BHS to learn and practice countless new skills. I was also afforded the opportunity to leverage skills acquired in prior roles to help the BHS team with aspects of their work and contribute to the team in non-traditional ways.

The perspective, guidance and hands-on practice experience that I received in my time at BHS will support me throughout my Social Work career. And the relationships that I built with the amazing staff will serve as a source of inspiration and pride always," said Smith.

Speech student gives feedback on experience-driven learning at WMU Adult Wellness Programs

“Working at the Adult Wellness Center has been an incredibly rewarding experience, allowing me to develop and refine my skills in patient interaction, empathy and holistic care. Engaging with adults of diverse backgrounds has enhanced my ability to communicate effectively and understand individual needs, which is essential in speech-language pathology. This hands-on experience has also given me insight into the challenges faced by adults with speech and language disorders, preparing me to create personalized and effective therapy plans in my future career as a speech-language pathologist," said Masch.

Jacklyn Masch works with a participant at WMU Senior Day Services

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Ronella Chernov
Audiology Doctoral Student

“Completing my externship at WMU Unified Clinics has been a fantastic experience. I feel prepared to serve a diverse population of future patients and work in a variety of work settings.”
Current Level I OTD students at Unified Clinics

Jeremy Schultz, Speech-Language Pathology graduate student, works with a gentleman to improve speech.

A music therapy student at her practicum site, WMU Senior Day Services

Music and speech therapy students collaborate to work with a client

Students and their instructor observe a speech and music therapy session
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