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THE FUTURE OF COUNSELING EDUCATION IN ATLANTA, CHATTANOOGA, AND ONLINE



Making a Difference

Richmont Graduate University prepares future counselors for lives centered on healing, restoration, and transformation.

Some of the first lessons at Richmont Graduate University, a Christ-centered institution offering graduate education in clinical counseling and vocational ministry, begin with questions instead of answers.

Why do bad things happen? What gives life meaning? Where is God in suffering?

Richmont President Timothy Quinnan, Ph.D., says, "When people are grappling with some of the most difficult situations of their lives—whether it's trauma, the loss of a job or a loved one, or simply looking around at a world that seems completely on fire—Christian integration, which is a fusion of clinical counseling and biblical scholarship, adds another dimension that helps people negotiate the world around them. If you omit this spiritual lens, you're left with some dry and very objective scientific principles and answers, but those don't satisfy your heart."

Dr. Quinnan says Richmont attracts people who intentionally choose this kind of work. "People self-select to be here," he says. "They're here because they feel a powerful calling. They don't just want to come here, get a credential, and go out and make money. They believe in healing, restoration, and transformation, one person at a time."

Vice President of Admissions Michelle West earned her graduate degree from Richmont in 2019 before joining the university's leadership team. She says, "Preparing future counselors means recognizing every dimension of the people they serve. We're not just physical beings. We're physical, mental, and spiritual beings."

It's why students examine how faith, psychology, and lived experience intersect while completing CACREP-accredited counseling programs, the national gold standard for counselor education. Graduate students study online and on campuses in Atlanta and Chattanooga before gaining hands-on experience through internships in hospitals,

addiction recovery programs, universities, private practices, schools, churches, and nonprofit organizations across the country. Many students receive job offers before graduation, and 94% begin their careers within 180 days of earning their degrees.

Dr. Quinnan has watched that preparation earn the confidence of employers specifically seeking Richmont graduates. Before becoming president in 2017, he held senior leadership roles at the University of Texas at Arlington, Florida State University, San Diego State University, and the University of Cincinnati. After arriving at Richmont, he found himself hearing the same question from regional employers: How can we get more of your students?

"Time and again, people tell us Richmont graduates are among the best prepared they've ever hired," says Dr. Quinnan.

Life Well Spent

Students arrive at Richmont from every stage of life. Some come directly from undergraduate programs. Others return after careers in business, education, military service, or years spent raising families. Dr. Quinnan recalls one former board chair who spent 25 years as a CPA before returning to become a mental health clinician. "You can discover your calling at any point in life," he says.

Although Christian integration shapes the educational experience, students come from a variety of faith backgrounds. The difficult questions they begin asking and journaling about at Richmont often become the conversations graduates carry into counseling offices, hospitals, churches, classrooms, and communities throughout their careers.

"When it's all said and done," concludes Dr. Quinnan, "Richmont graduates will be able to say their life was well spent on others, rather than self-spent."



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