

ASCA State of the Profession – School Counselor Educators Summary of Findings

May 2026

This research of college/university faculty provides a comprehensive snapshot of the current landscape for school counselor education in the United States. Drawing on responses from 134 school counselor educators across a wide range of institutions and professional roles, this report examines faculty demographics, preparation models, program structures, institutional contexts and the challenges shaping the work of those who prepare future school counselors.

Findings indicate that school counselor educators continue to demonstrate strong alignment with the ASCA National Model®, ethical standards and data-informed practice. At the same time, respondents report mounting pressures related to enrollment declines, program sustainability, faculty workload, recruitment, and external policy and accreditation dynamics. Concerns related to advocacy, professional identity and mental health demands in schools feature prominently throughout the data.

Compared with the 2021 study, the 2026 findings reflect a profession navigating significant shifts, including declining master’s enrollment; diversification of instructional delivery; increased reliance on dual licensure and credentials; and heightened challenges associated with advocacy, accreditation and workforce sustainability. These findings underscore the need for continued alignment, advocacy and investment to support the future of the profession.

Methodology: The survey was distributed via email using the Qualtrics platform to 422 school counselor educators. One hundred thirty-four school counseling faculty completed the questionnaire for a confidence level of 95% +/- 7.7.

Respondents’ job roles and tenure status: The largest portions of respondents are assistant professors (22%), program directors (20%), associate professors (21%), department chairs (8%) or adjunct instructors (8%). Adjunct professors indicate they teach anywhere from two to nine hours. Among other responses, participants indicate they are both associate professor and department chair or point to a title already included in the list. Three quarters of respondents (76% vs. 83% in 2021) primarily teach school counseling courses, while the remainder do not, indicating they teach broadly across counseling programs due to overlapping curricula, combined programs, limited numbers of school-counseling-specific courses, small or

shrinking programs, and faculty roles that span multiple specializations rather than focusing exclusively on school counseling.

More than one-third of respondents (37%) are tenured, 22% are nontenured and 20% are on the tenure track. For 14%, their university does not offer tenure. Asked about the number of school-counseling-related publications or presentations they have produced in the past two years, 31% have produced one-to-three, and 30% have produced four-to-six. Another one quarter (25%) have produced seven or more, and 15% have produced none.

Job role	2026	2021
Assistant professor	21.8%	26.0%
Program director	20.4%	21.0%
Associate professor	21.1%	18.0%
Adjunct instructor	8.2%	12.0%
Professor	12.2%	9.0%
Instructor (full time)	4.1%	5.0%
Department chair	8.2%	4.0%
Retired	1.4%	1.0%
Other	2.7%	4.0%

Tenure Status	2026	2021
Tenured	37.3%	32.5%
Nontenured	22.4%	22.5%
Tenure track	20.1%	25.5%
University does not offer tenure	14.2%	15.5%
Other	6.0%	4.0%

Respondents' universities: A majority of respondents work for public universities (61%), followed by private/independent (20%) and religious-affiliated (19%). Additionally, 60% of respondents' institutions provide a combination of in-person and virtual instruction, while 29% are in-person only and 9% are virtual only. In terms of enrollment, 47% have seen a decrease in enrollment in master's students in the past two years, one-quarter say enrollment has increased and 29% stayed the same. Today, about half of respondents' universities are CACREP accredited, while 25% are accredited by CAEP and 15% hold an accreditation from a regional body. Regional accreditors cited include Higher Learning Commission, California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, Texas Education Agency and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, for example.

Type	2026	2021
Public	61.0%	58.2%
Private/Independent	19.5%	25.4%
Religious-affiliated	18.7%	15.3%
Other	0.8%	1.1%

Type of instruction	2026	2021
In-person instruction only	28.5%	33.3%
Combination in-person and virtual instruction	60.2%	57.6%
Virtual only	8.9%	7.9%
Other	2.4%	1.1%

Change in enrollment (master's) in past two years	2026	2021
Increased	23.6%	48.3%
Decreased	47.2%	25.9%
Stayed the same	29.3%	25.9%

Accreditations held	2026	2021
CACREP	49.7%	69.2%
CAEP	24.6%	41.9%
Regional accrediting body	14.8%	36.0%
AAQEP	3.8%	n/a
CHEA	0.5%	6.4%
Other	6.6%	14.5%

Day-to-day challenges: Respondents indicate they are most challenged to find time for research/writing (65%), lack of adequate funding for research focused on the school counseling field (60%) and advocating for the school counseling profession (52%). Among the other challenges mentioned are attracting students to the field of school counseling, institutional neutrality, student learning outcomes and the prioritization of clinical mental health counseling over school counseling.

Extremely Challenging/Challenging Issues	2026	2021
Finding time for research/writing	64.6%	63.1%
Lack of adequate funding for research focused on the school counseling field	60.0%	56.1%
Advocating for the school counseling profession (finding time for advocacy, managing ethical issues around shifting legal landscape, etc.)	51.9%	n/a
Lack of adequate funding/resources to support the number of students in the program (staffing, etc.)	45.8%	53.8%
Hiring faculty to teach courses who have school counseling experience	42.8%	51.5%
Hiring diverse faculty (including representation by gender, ethnicity, etc.)	42.0%	47.2%
Incorporating AI tools into school counseling practice guidance	41.9%	n/a
Keeping up with technology tools for school counseling	36.7%	37.1%
Documenting, reporting or collecting data for program approval or accreditation	34.5%	n/a
Keeping up with state licensure and other guidelines for school counseling	26.0%	25.9%
Keeping up with changes in the school counseling profession	22.1%	24.5%
Job security	12.3%	13.2%
Delays and issues in achieving tenure	9.4%	9.7%

Program and coursework: More than three-quarters of respondents (76%) note that their program is 60 hours, while 14% require 48 or fewer hours and 2% require 52-56 hours programs. Among other responses are 51-, 61- or 73-hour programs.

Hours required for school counseling master's program	2026
36-40 hours	3.0%
42-48 hours	10.6%
52-56 hours	2.3%
60 hours	75.8%
Other	8.3%

All respondents strongly agree/agree their program instructs school counselors in professional behavior that reflects the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, relevant federal and state laws, and school district policies, and nearly all agree their program incorporates data-informed decision-making (99%), uses the ASCA National Model® as the basis for school counseling coursework (98%) and provides instruction in collecting and analyzing student and school data (97%), instructs school counseling students on how to address closing achievement and opportunity gaps (96%), and instructs school counseling students on how to deliver developmentally appropriate instruction focused on the mindsets and behaviors all K-12 students need for postsecondary readiness and success as reflected in the ASCA Student Standards (95%). Additionally, 90% agree their program integrates training on the ASCA National Model® throughout the program; 83%, instructs school counseling students about the structure, governance and evolution of the American education system; and 73% has a completely separate track for school counseling students.

Strongly agree/agree the school counseling preparation program at my university...	2026	2021
instructs school counselors in professional behavior that reflects the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors, relevant federal and state laws, and school district policies.	100.0%	n/a
incorporates data-informed decision making	99.2%	99.0%
uses the ASCA National Model® as the basis for school counseling coursework	98.4%	94.2%
instructs school counseling students in delivering the school counseling program to all students systematically	96.8%	96.9%
provides instruction in collecting and analyzing student and school data	96.8%	95.8%
instructs school counseling students in how to address closing achievement and opportunity gaps	96.1%	94.2%
instructs school counseling students on how to deliver developmentally appropriate instruction focused on the mindsets and behaviors all K-12 students need for postsecondary readiness and success as reflected in the ASCA Student Standards	95.3%	94.8%
integrates training on the ASCA National Model® throughout the program	89.7%	89.4%

instructs school counseling students about the structure, governance and evolution of the American education system	82.5%	n/a
has a complete separate track for school counseling students	72.5%	67.5%

Preparation challenges: Respondents noted that they face several challenges related to school counselor preparation to a great or some extent, including recruiting enough students (76%), managing the administrative workload of internship and practicum coordination (75%), ensuring supervisors understand the ASCA National Model® (73%) and securing high-quality placements (59%).

Perception of school counseling: Asked how well they believe others in their purview understand the role of school counselors, respondents find that school counseling faculty with school counseling experience best understand the role (98%), followed by school counseling faculty without school counseling experience (33%) and faculty/staff in their university’s College of Education (21%).

Understand the role of school counselors to a great extent or adequately	2026	2021
School counseling faculty with school counseling experience	98.2%	98.4%
School counseling faculty without school counseling experience	33.4%	36.8%
Faculty/staff in my university’s College of Education (who train future teachers and administrators)	20.6%	27.8%
State-level legislators/policymakers/decision-makers	7.9%	11.4%

Respondent demographics: Overall, 80% of respondents are female, while 16% are male and 5% prefer not to say. In terms of race/ethnicity, 71% are white and 12% are Black or African American, while smaller percentages represent other ethnicities. Additionally, 86% are heterosexual or straight, 2% are gay or lesbian and 2% are bisexual. In terms of age, 18% are 40 or younger, 34% are 41-50, 31% are 51-60 and 13% are 60-plus.

Gender	2026	2021
Female	79.5%	77.5%
Male	15.6%	17.9%
Nonbinary	0.0%	0.0%
Transgender	0.0%	n/a
Prefer not to say	4.9%	4.6%

Race/ethnicity	2026	2021
White	71.3%	71.7%
Black or African American	11.5%	12.7%
Asian	2.5%	4.6%
Two or more races	2.5%	3.5%
Hispanic or Latino	3.3%	1.7%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.6%	0.6%
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific island	0.0%	0.0%
Prefer not to say	7.4%	5.2%

Sexuality	2026	2021
Heterosexual or straight	86.0%	86.0%
Gay or lesbian	1.7%	5.8%
Bisexual	1.7%	1.7%
Different identity	0.8%	0.6%
Prefer not to say	9.9%	5.8%

Age	2026	2021
30 or younger	0.0%	2.9%
31-40	18.0%	16.8%
41-50	34.4%	37.0%
51-60	31.1%	20.2%
61-70	11.5%	16.2%
71-plus	1.6%	4.0%
Prefer not to say	3.3%	2.9%

Education and certifications: The majority of respondents hold doctorate degrees (72% in counseling or counseling supervision and training and 20% in another discipline). About 86% are LPCs, and 11% hold their NBCT. Almost all respondents (96%) have previously worked as a K-12 school counselor.

Highest level of education	2026	2021
Master's degree in school counseling	7.4%	9.7%
Master's degree in other discipline	1.6%	1.1%
Doctorate degree in counseling or counseling supervision and training	72.1%	69.3%
Doctorate degree in other discipline	18.9%	19.9%

Certifications/designations held	2026	2021
ACSC	3.2%	n/a
LPC	85.7%	42.7%
NBCT	11.1%	1.2%

Years' experience as K-12 school counselor	2026	2021
0-2	12.4%	12.1%
3-5	22.1%	19.5%
6-10	26.2%	24.1%
11-15	20.5%	18.4%
16-20	6.6%	7.5%
20+	8.2%	14.9%
Have not worked as a K–12 school counselor	4.1%	3.4%