

*Counseling
Department*



CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS & DEGREE ENHANCEMENTS

Department Chair
Dr. Lee Teufel-Prida

04/13/2026

WELCOME!

- The anchor of our work
- Clinical immersion
- Our shared responsibility

The Counseling Department at the Family Institute at Northwestern University is committed to upholding the highest standard of excellence and this includes programmatic accreditation and innovative student learning. It is my sincere hope that you all lean into these modifications and embrace the possibilities to come!



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1. RATIONALE

- The 2024 Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP; which is the programmatic accreditation for the MA in Counseling program) replaced the 2016 CACREP standards (which the MA in Counseling is accredited under) and became effective July 1, 2024, marking the transition from one set of accreditation guidelines to the other.
- As a result, the MA in Counseling was required to revise course offerings, revise course content, course timing, and immersion requirements to satisfy these guidelines. *All CACREP programs that want to maintain accreditation are undergoing these modifications.*
- Given the depth and breadth of curriculum changes already occurring, the MA in Counseling capitalized on this change process and added several program enhancements as well.



RATIONALE CONT...

The program went through a multi-step approval process of these changes over the last year and a half. Approval steps included consultation with the CACREP liaison and committee, core faculty, The Family Institute (TFI) leadership, The Graduate School (TGS), and Northwestern University

- Stakeholders, including students, could only be informed once changes were officially approved by TGS and Northwestern University.
- Final approval of these changes was achieved in March 2026.



2. CURRICULUM MODIFICATIONS



FOUNDATIONS COURSE

This course introduces students to the profession of clinical mental health counseling and the development of counselor professional identity.

Students will examine the historical, philosophical, and empirical foundations of the field, as well as the roles and functions of mental health counselors across contemporary practice settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methods will now include program evaluation.

Course will now be titled Research Methods and Program Evaluation.

IMMERSIONS

CACREP policy (A.2.e) requires of counselor education programs to assess students' dispositions and skills at least twice during their time in the program. 2 required immersions regardless of delivery methods. 1 immersion must occur prior to practicum.

CURRICULUM CHANGES CONT...



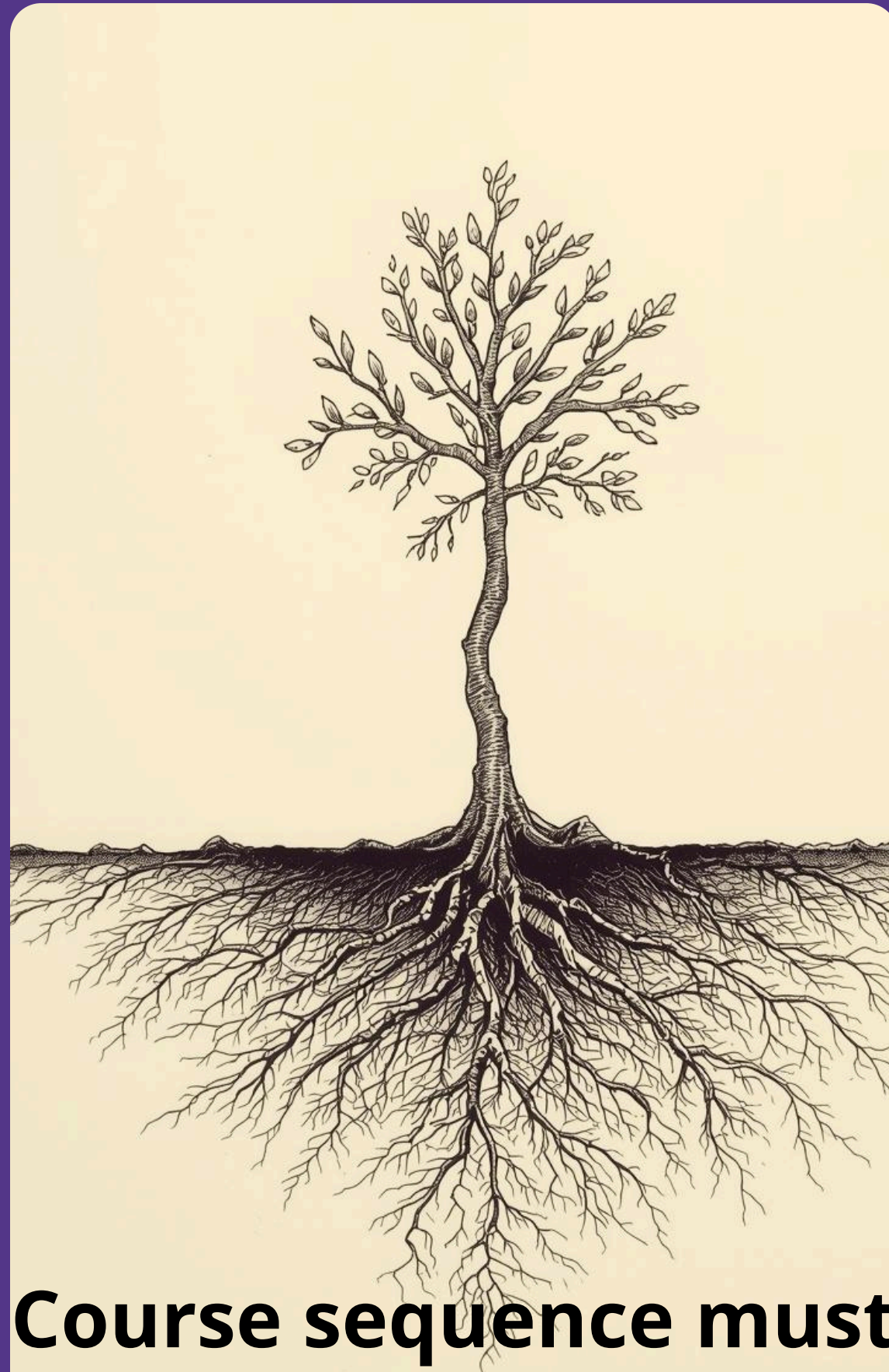
- The first immersion will now be a Foundations Immersion (associated with the Foundations course) instead of New Student Immersion (online students) and Orientation (on ground students).
- Orientation will now be online and asynchronous for online and on ground delivery methods.
- Group Dynamics Immersion will remain as 2nd immersion.

Curriculum Plans

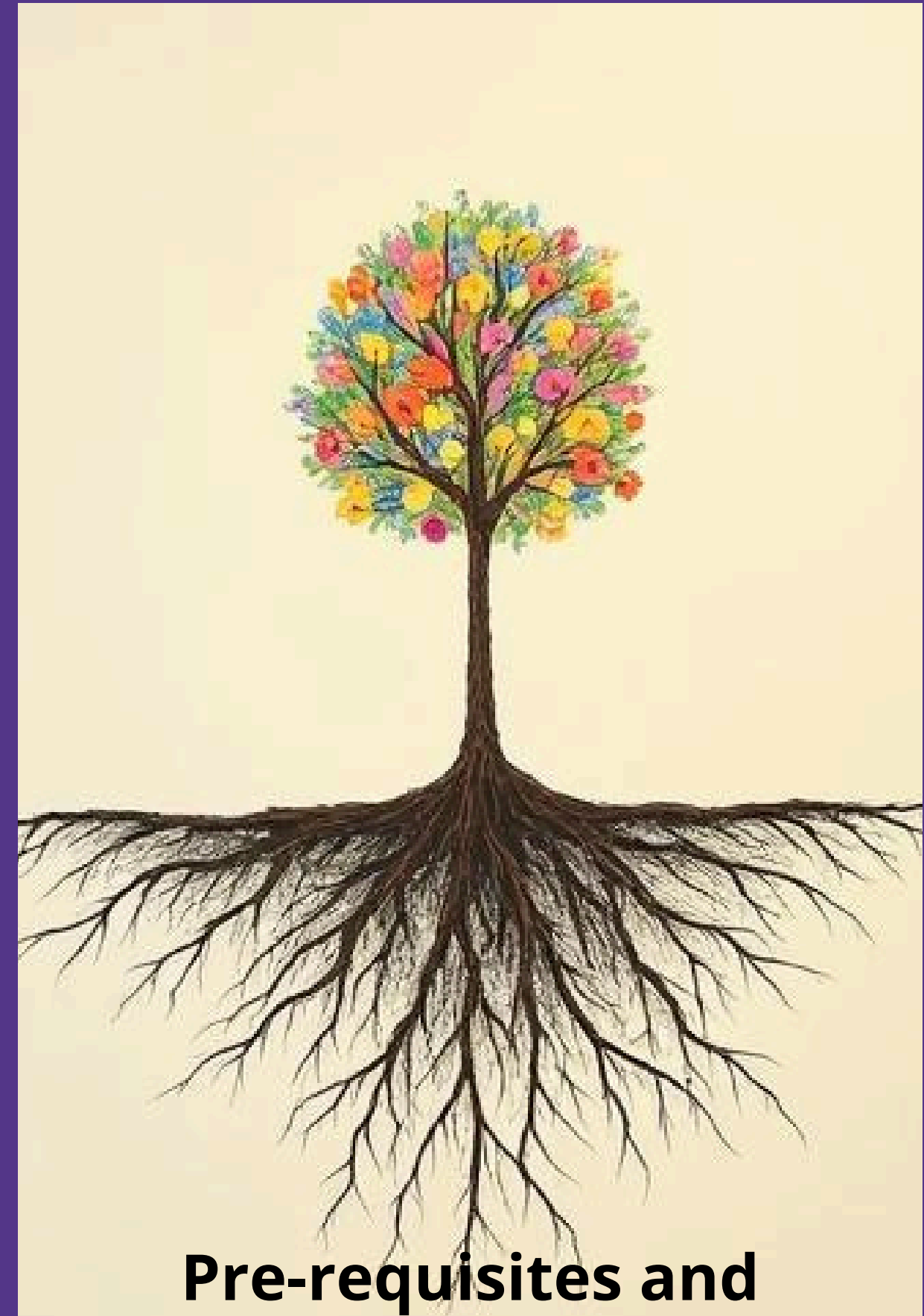
As a result of accreditation requirement to sequence curriculum and assess student development over time, the program will require a prescribed course sequence and course pre-requisites to progress in the curriculum plans. Upon entry into the program, students complete a curriculum plan designed to pace the students through the program. The curriculum plan accounts for pre-requisite skills and knowledge in addition to state licensure requirements.

***Professional Topics will no longer be offered.**

***Custom curriculum plans will be used for current students**



Course sequence must be followed



Pre-requisites and developmental milestones

3. PROGRAM ENHANCEMENTS

CAPSTONE ENDING

- The program is ending Capstone as a final assignment and replacing with a comprehensive portfolio of key assignments.
- Student will have enhanced opportunities for scholarly opportunities instead of a singular opportunity via Capstone.

CLINICAL TRAINING MODERNIZATION

- Introduction of Pre-Practicum course plus 2 terms of Practicum to ensure clinical training readiness
- Specific start date after completion of Pre-Practicum and Foundations Immersion.
- Introduction of improved hours tracking system.
- Introduction of simulated clients to improve clinical skill development.

ENHANCEMENTS

CONT....

REVISED COURSES

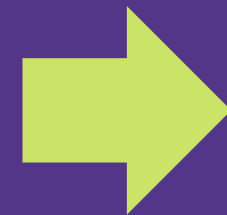
- Orientation course created and built for both delivery methods.
- The Bridge series (2 plus Onground) has been rebuilt to ensure consistency between delivery methods and allow for the introduction of the Foundations course.
- Immersion curriculum updated with increased involvement from core faculty and new dedicated immersion week to ensure focused attention and availability to participate.

MISSION AND VISION

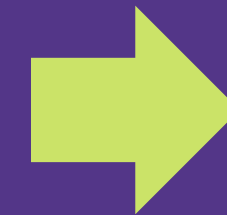
- To ensure alignment with The Family Institute and Northwestern the program's mission and vision is being updated.
- Updated learning objectives to reflect the new mission and vision.
- Increased alignment between delivery methods (online and onground) reflected in admissions, immersions, and student experiences.

4. TIMELINE

**PROJECT START--
FALL 2024**

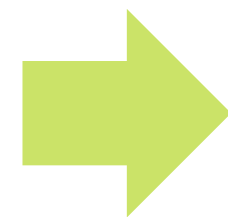


**FACULTY AGREE TO
PROPOSED
CHANGES: SPRING
2025**

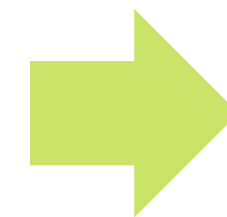


**TGS AGREES TO
MODIFICATIONS
WINTER 2026**

**NU AGREES TO
MODIFICATIONS
MARCH 2026**



**STAKEHOLDER
MEETINGS
SPRING & SUMMER
2026**



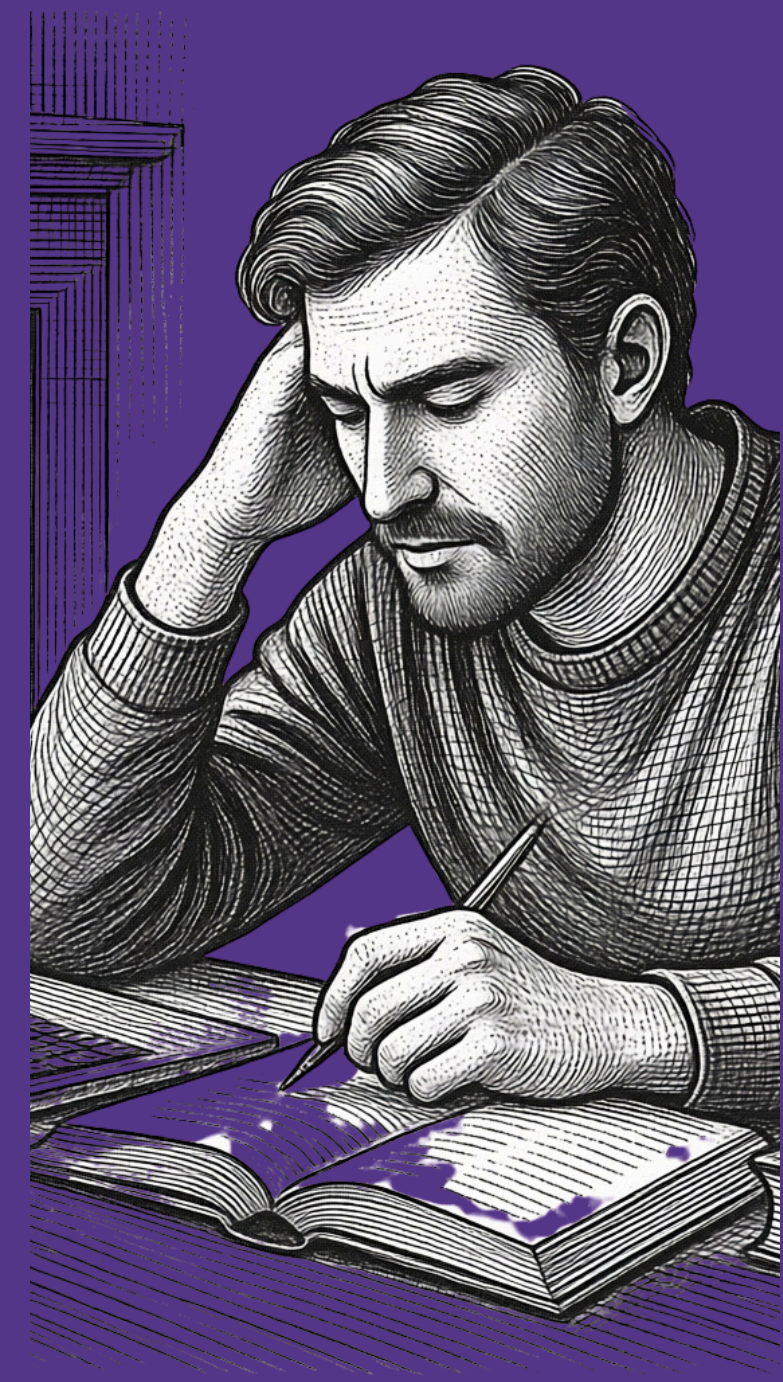
**IMPLEMENTATION &
LAUNCH OF
MODIFICATIONS
FALL 2026**



5. INFORMATION SESSIONS

SESSIONS EVERY MONTH

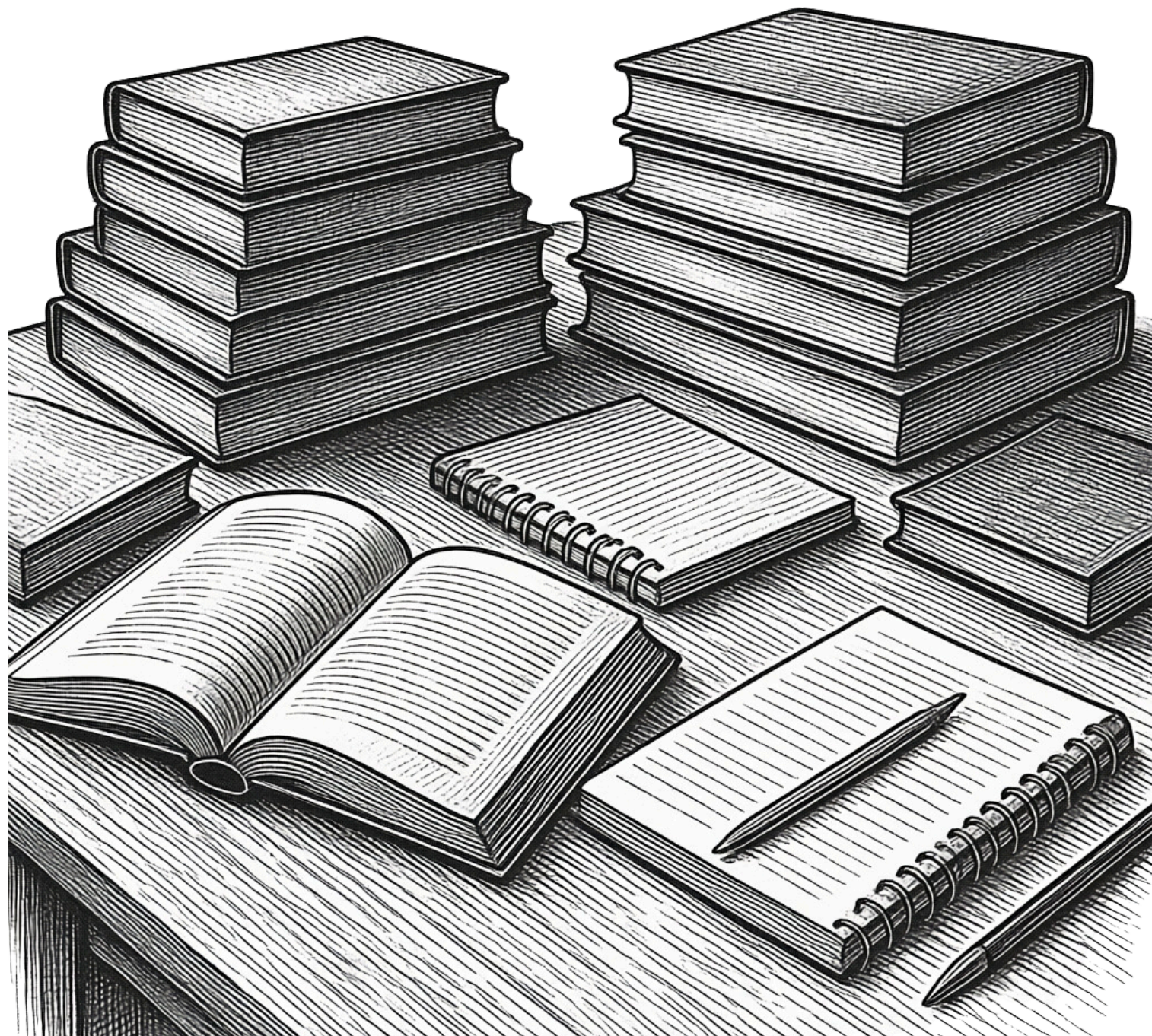
- Each month the program will offer information sessions to cover these changes in greater detail.
- Specific dates & times will be emailed with zoom information



TOPICS

- May---Clinical Training & Academic courses
- June---Capstone sunset and Portfolio requirement
- July---Immersions
- August---Curriculum Planning and FAQs

6. FAQs



- A specific FAQ document will be shared after this meeting.
- The FAQ document will be updated with additional guidance as needed.
- Feedback/question form.

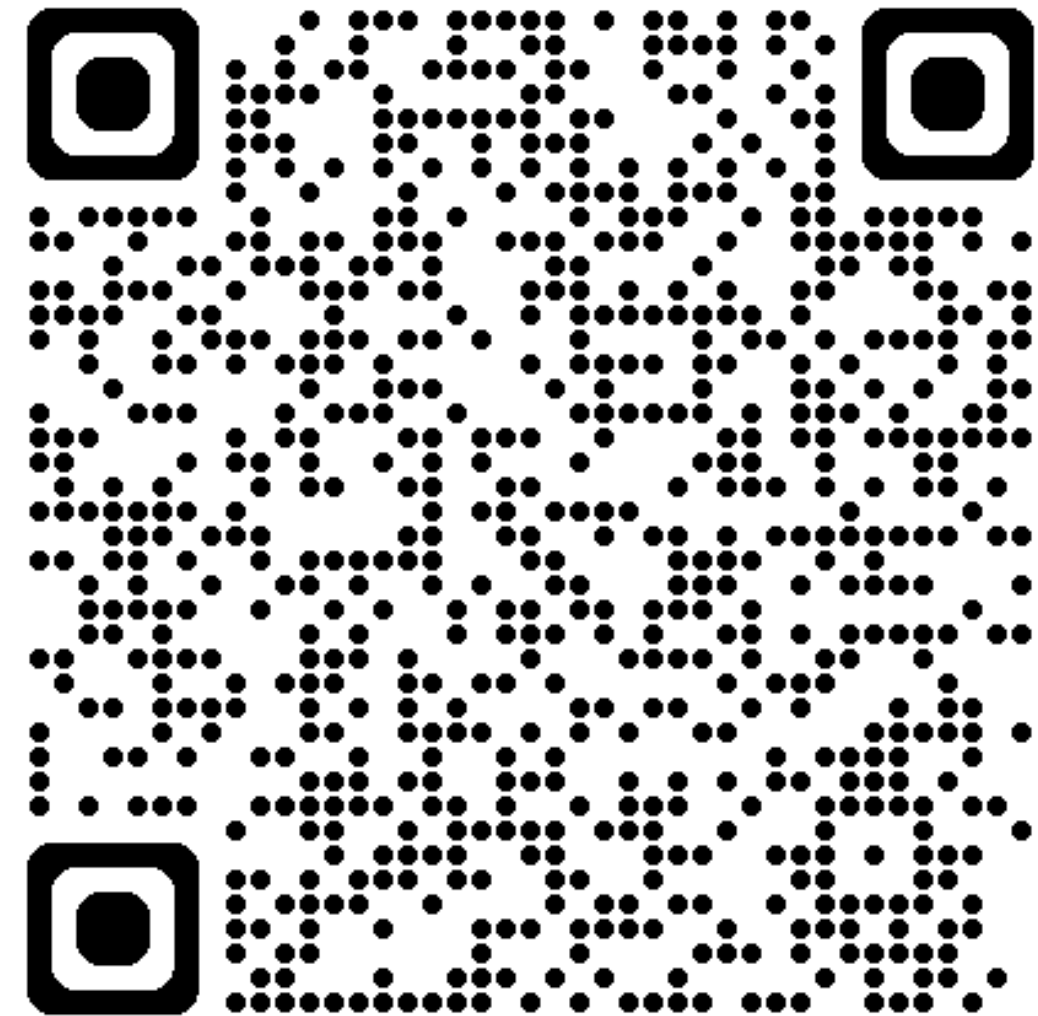
“The secret of change is to focus all of your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new.”

--Socrates



7. FAQ & ANY ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

QR code to FAQ
document &
where to ask a
question



¡THANK YOU!