

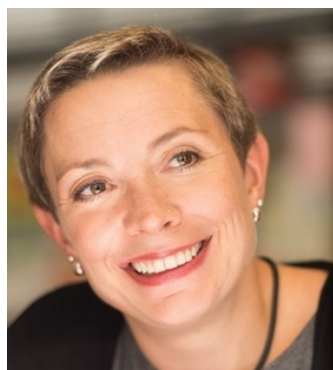


A Newsletter from the Accreditation Council  
for Genetic Counseling

## Welcome to the ACGC Messenger

Welcome to the 2024 Third Quarter ACGC Messenger newsletter. We look forward to keeping you updated with important information and announcements in this quarterly newsletter.

## ACGC Board of Directors Spotlight



**Jehannine (J9) Austin, PhD, MSc, CGC**  
DEIJ Committee Board Liaison  
*Professor, UBC Departments of Psychiatry and  
Medical Genetics*

### Introduction

Dr. J9 Austin is a Professor in Psychiatry & Medical Genetics at the University of British Columbia, where they were also graduate advisor for the Genetic Counseling MSc program for sixteen years. J9 is a board-certified genetic counsellor, and their research work involves studying how to improve access to genetics services for people who have historically been marginalized and working to ensure that those services are safe and effective. They founded the world's first specialist psychiatric genetic counselling service, which won an award for its impact on patient outcomes, and in addition to peer-reviewed publications, has written a book, and won awards for teaching, leadership, and research. J9 has previously served as president of NSGC, is a Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and Editor in Chief of the [Journal of Genetic Counseling](#).

### What's your background (in a nutshell)?

I was born and raised in the United Kingdom – where I did my undergrad in Biochemistry and completed a PhD in neuropsychiatric genetics before making a solo move to Vancouver, B.C. in 2001 to train at the University of British Columbia's Genetic Counseling program. I fell in love with both the place and a human and never left. I've never practiced clinically as a genetic counselor - I am a tenured research professor. I live with psychiatric stuff myself (depression and anxiety) and have spent much of my career to date exploring the intersection between my two graduate degrees and my own personal experiences by examining the impact of providing genetic counseling for people with psychiatric conditions and their families. I founded the world's first specialist service to provide this for people which ran for eleven years before being [closed last year](#). I'm now spending my energy on exploring how we can integrate genetic counselors into primary care settings - among other things.

### What got you interested in joining the ACGC Board?

I have always been interested in using my experiences as best I can to serve my profession - I've previously served on the NSGC board for example. But I think the reason I was interested in ACGC specifically, was that this organization has a very fundamental role to play in the future of our profession; it has responsibility for ensuring the quality - and safety - of the training our students receive. This is something I care passionately about - I spent sixteen years as a graduate advisor for the University of British Columbia genetic counseling program and am bringing my reflections from that experience to this role as a member of the board.

### What are the silliest nicknames that you call your pet?

We have a single cat now.... sadly, her brother died at the beginning of the year. So as a newly "only cat", she is now getting ALL the attention and love, and I think she finally feels that the appropriate state of affairs has been achieved for her. Anyway, she has a million names... most of which she will answer to (she is very chatty) - her actual name is Galadriel (like the elf queen in Lord of the Rings) but we only call her by that name when she is doing something she shouldn't ... like sitting on the dining table. Mostly we call her Gally, Gally-cat, Beauty, Baby Girl, Sweetie, and.....Schnuckel (and several variations on this word - my partner is German).

## DEIJ Training Recommendations Article

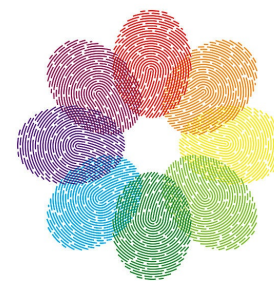
*By Chloe Dugger, MS, CGC*

To enhance genetic counselor's educational experiences, ACGC has introduced standards encouraging the incorporation of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) efforts into different aspects of accredited programs. These Standards aim to provide program faculty and fieldwork supervisors with the necessary resources to foster an inclusive educational environment by implementing an educational experience pertaining to a DEIJ subject matter of their choosing on an annual basis. As a reminder, ACGC does not endorse any one approach, as various programs may interpret and implement these Standards differently. The following are examples of approaches your fellow programs have taken.

As part of Boise State University's Master of Science in Genetic Counseling program, program leadership has notified faculty and fieldwork supervisors of the importance of DEIJ training but has left the specific training style and approach up to the individual staff members. Jen Eichmeyer, Program Director at Boise State, said that some resources staff members have utilized include recorded talks followed by personal reflection, group book discussions and participation in an ethics board. To track the annual progress across the program, a Google form/survey is sent out to collect the details of the activity, such as the topic, the length of time spent, etc. to fulfill the training requirements outlined within the ACGC Standards.

This form then auto populates into a tracking Excel file, allowing the leadership team to have an easy reference record to demonstrate completion of this requirement. Additionally, the Boise State program is planning to create a one-hour video related to a different topic within DEIJ annually. Participants will be required to watch this video unless they have already completed a similar activity.

At the Emory University Genetic Counseling Program, Program Director Lauren Lichten indicated that leadership has provided links to educational materials to those who are expected to fulfill this training requirement. These links are readily available through the University's Center for Teaching and Learning and Office of Multicultural Affairs as well as the National Society of Genetic Counselors. Lauren also shared that "The links are sorted by program role as we know our community members have very full schedules.



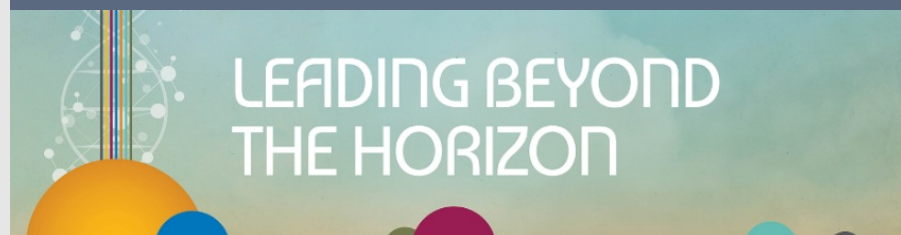
We plan on offering relevant activities through meetings that already occur, such as our faculty meetings, supervisor meetings, and departmental case conferences. To track compliance, we created a survey that will be distributed at regular intervals to all program faculty, supervisors, and leaders. We will update the resource list as our community shares how they fulfilled the requirement. Above all, we are keeping the bigger picture in mind that training is only the first small step in making our profession a more inclusive space".

At the University of Manitoba, Program Director Jessica Hartley shared that the entire department in which the Genetic Counseling program is included has implemented several initiatives to ensure comprehensive professional development and attention to DEIJ standards. All full-time faculty members in our department, including and beyond the GC program leaders, document their professional development activities in their annual performance reviews with the Department Head. To ensure access to learning opportunities, close attention had been paid to ensuring the content within the department's annual Faculty Educational day and Annual Genetic Counselling Program retreat meets accreditation training requirements. Finally for fieldwork supervisors, a tracking sheet is circulated annually to document their training, whether it occurs at the retreat or through other avenues. Course instructors are also required to include documentation of their training in their annual reports to the curriculum review subcommittee. These instructors are invited to the program retreat (if they are GC) and the department's annual educational day. Furthermore, additional events that would fulfill the training requirements are circulated to all these individuals as they become available.

Wayne State is taking a multi-pronged approach to tracking training in fieldwork supervision, DEIJ, and education for fieldwork supervisors and core course faculty (primarily course directors). They are incorporating sessions on DEIJ and fieldwork supervision into the annual clinical supervisors' workshop, into their medical genetics and genomics grand rounds, and occasionally incorporate education topics in these events as well. This provides a built-in opportunity to train supervisors (and other faculty) in these areas. Since CEUs are provided for both activities, the CEU tracking sheets that are sent to NSGC can be used as tracking mechanisms. Because many supervisors/educators attend these events, this is an easy way to verify required training for a majority of our supervisors/faculty. Angela Trepanier, Program Director of Wayne State, also mentioned that the program will use a tracking survey that will be sent quarterly to fieldwork supervisors and faculty to allow them to self-report DEIJ, education, and fieldwork supervision training. The survey asks about topic, date, hours, sponsoring organization, if it is a CEU activity, and which category(ies) it satisfies (supervision, education, and/or DEIJ). For people who are not compliant by Q3, a reminder email will be sent about the requirement and suggestions on activities that would meet the requirements will be provided.

As a reminder, Continuing Education Units (CEUs) are not a requirement for this initiative. Instead, tracking the completion of this standard and its processes will rely on the trust-based relationships we have with programs. ACGC will not ask for certificates of completion but will require formal documentation during site visits that the requirement has been met through the completion of the minimum training hour thresholds outlined in the Standards. We trust programs to internally track their participants' progress, and the methods utilized. We encourage you to explore local resources such as those put forth by your institution and utilize free resources offered by the National Society of Genetic Counselors (NSGC), Genetic Counseling Education Association (GCEA), and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). If you have additional questions on how to fulfill the training Standards, you are always welcome to reach out to ACGC at [info@gceducation.org](mailto:info@gceducation.org).

## ACGC at NSGC 2024



**43rd**  
**ANNUAL CONFERENCE**  
Sept. 17-21, 2024  
Ernest N. Morial Convention Center  
New Orleans, LA

Are you taking part in a Site Visit this year and still have questions about the process? Are you simply intrigued by what the Program Review Committee of ACGC even does? Join us at our in-person Self-Study/Site Visit Training from **8-9 am CST on Friday, September 20th** of the NSGC 2024 conference to ask questions, grab some breakfast, and check-in with ACGC on this important process! Please note, this will be the only ACGC event at NSGC, there will not be Office Hours held this year.

## New Resources Available on the ACGC Website

A language guide has been created by the ACGC Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Committee to "help ACGC, and others involved in training, use language that is more inclusive and does not perpetuate harm against individuals who are part of historically excluded and marginalized communities."

Along with this resource, the 2023 Annual Report has been published. If you would like to look back at last year, this report can be found [here](#). Additionally, if you missed our communication in August, ACGC fee increases will go into effect as of **January 1, 2026**. Those can be viewed on our website [here](#).

## Program Development

**2024 Application Status**  
**Ongoing New Program Applications**

Charles Drew University (May 15, 2024, Review Cycle)  
Southern California University Health Sciences (May 15, 2024, Review Cycle)  
University at Buffalo (January 15, 2025, Review Cycle)

**Accredited, New Program Status**

Loma Linda University School of Medicine  
Xavier University of Louisiana

**2024 Programs Undergoing Reaccreditation**

Augustana University  
Medical College of Wisconsin  
Sarah Lawrence College  
Stanford University  
University of Arizona Health Sciences  
University of British Columbia  
University of California – San Francisco  
University of Washington  
Wake Forest University  
Washington University in St. Louis

**Announcements**



National Society of Genetic Counselors 43rd Annual Conference – *New Orleans, LA*: **September 17-21, 2024**  
Canadian Association of Genetic Counselors 2024 Annual Education Conference – *Quebec City, Quebec*: **September 25-28, 2024**  
2024 Site Visits: **October 2024 through January 2025**  
American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics Annual Clinical Genetics Meeting – *Los Angeles, CA*: **March 18-22, 2025**  
Accreditation Fees Due: **June 30, 2025**  
Report of Current Status Application Due: **June 30, 2025**  
Self-Study Application Due: **August 1, 2025**  
National Society of Genetic Counselors 44th Annual Conference – *Seattle, WA*: **November 7-10, 2025**

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*We encourage you to forward and share this newsletter on your social media platforms or with colleagues and associates.*

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