

Biographical Data and Platform Statements

2024 Candidates

BOARD MEMBER (3 POSITIONS)



Rikki Patton, PhD (she/her/hers)

I love being an MFT because it means belonging to a community filled with amazing people doing awesome things, and because it affords us with so many professional possibilities. By choosing MFT

as my professional home, I have had the opportunity to serve others through multiple pathways, such as by being a therapist, supervisor, educator, program director, researcher, and volunteer. From these roles, I have acquired extensive experience in MFT education, research, practice, and administrative domains. Having gained so much from being an MFT, and from our MFT community, I am thoroughly excited by the possibility of giving back through serving our field in a different capacity – as an AAMFT Board Member. I have the leadership competencies to be successful in this role, which I have developed through my various professional roles and activities (see below). Of note, I prioritize a collaborative orientation, am passionate about advocating for our field, and firmly believe in the potential of propelling our field forward through strategic and innovative efforts. Having the opportunity to serve the MFT community by becoming a Board Member, and providing voice and insights for our field's future, would be a wonderful honor.

To further the development of our field, it is important to honor the hard work of those who have served before, while also providing insights and strategies to propel MFT forward. To do this, I believe it means working with others on meeting the goals of our AAMFT Strategic Plan, currently slated through 2026. Additionally, it means working to ensure the next revision of the Strategic Plan continues to encapsulate core issues that are important to protecting the practice and profession of MFT. Such issues include continuing advocacy efforts for professional distinctiveness, parity, licensure portability, and social justice efforts. Thank you for your consideration.

(I) PRESENT PROFESSIONAL POSITION

- Research Professor and PhD Program Director, Drexel University (2023 – present)
- Owner and Clinician, Family Connection V, LLC (2018 - present)
- Independent Marriage and Family Therapy with Supervision Designation (Ohio)

(II) MOST RELEVANT PAST PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS (WITHIN THE LAST 7 YEARS)

- Professor, School of Social Work and Family Sciences, University of Akron, (2022)
- Associate Professor, School of Social Work and Family Sciences and School of Counseling, University of Akron (2018-2022)
- Assistant Professor and PhD Program Director, School of Counseling, University of Akron (2013-2018)
- Clinician, Family Connection of Wadsworth, LLC (2015-2018)

(III) AAMFT MEMBERSHIP: PAST AND PRESENT PARTICIPATION IN AAMFT, INCLUDING TOPICAL AND GEOGRAPHIC INTEREST NETWORKS

- AAMFT Member since 2008
- AAMFT Approved Supervisor since 2015
- AAMFT Family Team Member
- Member of the following AAMFT Topical Interest Networks:
 - Intervention Research in Systemic Family Therapy
 - Queer and Trans Advocacy Network
- AAMFT CEC Committee Member (2019-2023)
- AAMFT Minority Fellowship Program Advisory Committee Member, AAMFT Research & Education Foundation, 2016 – 2019
- AAMFT Minority Fellowship Program Mentor, AAMFT Research & Education Foundation, 2014 – 2016
- Ohio Association of Marriage and Family Therapy/ Ohio Interest Network (formerly OAMFT), 2012 – 2020

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(IV) PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES (Activities should be directly linked to the position and should demonstrate the skills needed for the position. Please refer to the list of competencies and skills for the position)

Past and present activities, projects, or publications (limit 3) that are evidence of leadership skills, experience integrating information, working towards consensus, and decision-making skills.

I currently serve in multiple roles that encapsulate examples of the leadership skills necessary to competently serve as a member of the AAMFT Board, as outlined below.

- *PhD Program Director.*

This role requires a strong team orientation, respecting the diversity of opinions and experiences of the multiple communities of interest that I serve. As PD, I am also responsible for overseeing the strategic goals of our program, ensuring active engagement of all stakeholders, and guaranteeing our program is being managed within the policies set forth by our institution. These skills will transfer well into the role of Board member.

- *Grant PI and Co-Investigator.*

Serving as a Grant PI and co-investigator requires interpersonal skills, being strategic and innovative, and relying on technical skills to oversee success of all grant project components. Most of the grants I have worked on have been primarily multi-site projects, which has required me to develop competencies in respecting the team process while also prioritizing timely decision-making. These are skills that will serve me well if elected to the Board.

- *Lead and co-author.*

Authoring materials for dissemination requires a level of integrity, critical thinking, decision-making, and commitment to the process. Additionally, since most of my work is collaborative in nature, I have also developed competencies in leadership and collaboration within this context. Some recent publications exemplifying leadership skills and working towards consensus are as follows:

Chou, J., Patton, R., & Aletaris, L. (2024). Examining utilization of family-based therapies in substance use treatment centers. *Contemporary Family Therapy*.

This article was a collaboration across faculty from three institutions.

Patton, R., Chou, J., Kester, T., & Feeney, E. (2024).

Exploring social connectedness, isolation, support, and recovery factors among women seeking substance use treatment. *Women & Health*.

This article was the result of a small community-based grant project that required coordination between faculty and community healthcare administration and workers.

Patton, R., Chou, J., Zaarur, A., Dang, Y., Katafiasz, H., & Swint, P. (2023). Exploring substance use perceptions among Family Therapy and Counseling trainees upon entering an opioid use disorder treatment training program. *International Journal of Systemic Therapy*.

This article resulted from a federal grant project that required coordination and collaboration across two universities and multiple training sites.

- *MBA student.*

I believe leadership is a process of continual learning and application. To strengthen my own leadership knowledge and skills, I enrolled in a part-time MBA program with an Effective Leadership concentration. Through this process, I have learned how to better navigate the business side of MFT, including fiduciary and legal responsibilities, strategic leadership principles, and the governance process overall.

(V) COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION: Past and present activities demonstrating knowledge of and commitment to social justice and systemic science.

I believe my commitment to social justice and systemic science is integrated into the various ways I approach my work and how I attend to the responsibilities of the roles I serve. Below are some examples of how I have infused social justice and DEI considerations into my work:

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- *In Teaching.*

I collaborated with colleagues to re-vamp our MFT Masters' curriculum to better address diversity across the curriculum, after receiving feedback from students that they wanted more inclusion of diverse topics throughout their training. We later published our process of doing this in Contemporary Family Therapy. I also had the opportunity to teach our poverty course. When teaching it the first term, I had a couple of students who struggled to access the text due to financial constraints. I added a copy to the course reserves, but this did not support additional challenges due to childrearing and other life responsibilities. I found it ridiculous that I was teaching a course on poverty that had cost barriers built in! I applied for a small internal grant to re-work our poverty course to be an Affordable Learning Initiative course, where we removed the costly textbook and replaced it with all open-access materials.

- *In my Research and Scholarship.*

I utilize reflexivity across all steps of my work and include reflexivity check-ins in the groups I collaborate with. Doing so is important for continually building awareness of self and the biases that may occur in any project. Example publications/presentations that explicitly evidence how I aim to infuse diversity and justice considerations into my work are listed below:

- o Patton, R. & Chou, J. (March, 2022). Increasing diversity and inclusivity when working with adolescents impacted by opioid use disorder. Workshop presentation at the 2022 Society for Research on Adolescence Biennial Conference. New Orleans, LA.
- o Zaarur, A., Chou, J., & Patton, R. (March, 2022). Exploring Cultural Competency among Participants in a Substance Use Treatment Training Program. Poster presentation Workshop presentation at the 2022 Society for Research on Adolescence Biennial Conference. New Orleans, LA.
- o Katafiasz, H & Patton, R. (2021). Closing the Loop: Addressing Diversity in a COAMFTE-accredited MFT Education Program. Contemporary Family Therapy.

(VI) RELEVANT DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION – Optional (up to five sentences)

You may choose to identify and/or describe parts of your background which may include the following: work setting (e.g., private practice, academia, agency, community health, government), home location (e.g., rural, urban, suburban), region (e.g., US state, international), any other relevant demographic information (e.g., age, ethnicity/race, gender, sexual orientation, religious/spiritual affiliation, ability, immigration status, languages spoken).

- I work in both academia and private practice, with experience supervising trainees across diverse settings.
- I grew up on the southside of Columbus, Ohio (go Red Devils!), and I come from a family with an Appalachian heritage.
- My current chapter of life involves raising two children, one adolescent and one tween.