

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024
Program Evaluation Summary
REHABILITATION COUNSELING PROGRAM
(CACREP Standard Section 4.D)

2023-2024 Program Objectives

Objective 1: Ensuring graduate competence in the latest knowledge skills, and dispositional standards.

Objective 2: To attract and retain diverse faculty and students.

Objective 3: Excellence through program evaluation and self-study.

Objective 4: Critical evaluation of current syllabi for equity, diversity, social justice, and inclusion-related content that reflects current knowledge and projected needs concerning counseling practice in a multicultural and pluralistic society.

Objective 5: Maintain the number of students who are participating in professional organizations

I. Summary of Program Evaluation Results (Standard Section 4.D.1)

Disability Rate Study:

2022-2024 anonymous disability study

- A voluntary, anonymous survey of current students in the program revealed a self-disclosed rate of disability of approximately 3x the national average (41.2% of respondents identified as having a disability; $n = 34$) when compared with 2020 American Community Survey statistics (13%). Objective 2; standard Section 4.B.2)

Applicant and Current Student Demographics Comparisons:

Summary: The following indicates that our applicant pool and accepted student have been growing more diverse this year overall when comparing demographics from 2018-2020. Gender remains weighted toward female applicants. (Student demographic statistics will be updated in January 2024):

2022 to 2023 Academic Year Demographics Students

- Current students in the 2022-2023 academic year demographics: 38% White, 30% Black/African American, 12% Hispanic/Latinx, 9% Asian, 9% unknown, 2% American Indian/Native Alaskan. The group self-identified as 79% female, 20% male. (to be updated January 2024)

2019 to 2020 Academic Year Demographics for Students (for comparisons):

- Students during the 2019-2020 academic year demographics: 75% White, 10% Black/African American, 4% Hispanic/Latino, 4% 2 or more race; 2% Asian, 4% other; (86% female, 14% male).

Fall 2022 Accepted Applicant Demographics ($n = 37$):

- Student demographics for accepted students for the Fall 2022: 44% White, 19% two or more races, 15% Black/African American, 15% Asian, 4% Latinx, and 4% other. (to be updated January 2024)

Fall 2018 Applicants (for comparison):

- The pool of applicants to the program for Fall 2018 were: 63% white, 13% black, 8% Asian, 1% Other, and 15% more than one race/ethnicity - which is reasonably consistent with proportion of race/ethnicities of CRCs in the United States (CRC Annual Report 2018). Sixty-eight percent (68%) of applicants in 2018 were female. (Objective 2; standard Section 4.B.2)

Academic Success Indicators:

- A 2022 study of students who entered the program from 2013-2018 (part-time students revealed that 66.7% had successfully completed their master's degree programs (to be updated December 2023). (Objective 3; standard Section 4.E.3)
- 96.5% of student evaluations in internship for the 2022-2023 academic year were meeting expectations across all **3 key professional dispositions** (KPDS) based on site supervisor, internship evaluations. Students must meet expectations by their final evaluation for successful graduation (Objective 1; standard Section 4.B.1)
- 94.4% of student evaluations in internship for the 2022-2023 academic year were meeting expectations across all **11 key performance indicators** (KPIs) based on site supervisor, internship evaluations (5.6% near expectations; 0.0% below expectations). (Objective 1; standard Section 4.B.1).
- 95.5% of students admitted in Fall 2022 were near or meeting expected professional dispositions (KPDs) based on faculty evaluations, 0% were below expectations. (to be updated January 2024) (Objective 1; standard Section 4.B.1)
- CRC examination pass rates for dates in the for the 2022-2023 academic year = 56% (comparable to national pass rates); For 2021-2022 academic year, 70% of students passed the CRCC exam (above national pass rates). In the 2020 to 2021 academic year, 75% passed the CRCC exam (above the national average). The pass rates for the 2019 to 2020 academic year were 85.7% which is much higher than national average (Objective 1; standard Section 4.E.2).
- 100% of students either passed the CRCC examination or the UB Rehabilitation Counseling Program comprehensive exam.

Survey of Program Graduates (2023-2024 results):

Program Graduates Employment Rates

- Follow up survey of program graduates from 2017-2022, conducted in October, 2023 revealed: 100% reported they were employed (100% online students; 100% campus students; $n = 28$; 7% did not respond to question). Of the respondents, 96%% were employed is a job within the rehabilitation field; (Objective 3; standard Section 4.B.3)

2023 Emerging Needs Identified by Graduates

- WIOA and youth with disabilities services, affordable housing; access to providers/over capacity issues with service providers; vocational rehabilitation for those with substance use disorders, service providers have needs in recruiting rehab counselors, finding jobs in rehabilitation; COVID effects on mental health and workforce reintegration; advocating for CRC and licensure of rehab counselors in NYS; harm reduction in substance use treatment; increasing use of AI in professional contexts; counselor compassion fatigue and secondary trauma;

2023 Emerging Needs for underrepresented cultural groups or disability populations:

- Affordable housing; LGBTQ awareness (e.g., name preference, commonly used therapies); access to culturally competent providers; need for Spanish-speaking counselors; Spanish ASL, youth with behavioral disabilities accessing employment (transition services for youth with Bx issues and have exited high school); child care; support for refugee populations; greater understanding across multiple diverse cultures

Survey of Current Students (2023-2024 results):

2023-2024 Student Needs for Additional Support:(the following reflects themes that were found)

- **Internship and Clinical Site Coordination**
 - Improved coordination of traineeships with ACCES-VR. This includes setting guidelines for students in practicum and internships, areas of needs are competency considerations related to client wellbeing, workload guidelines that allow for appropriate learning, developmental leveling at appropriate stages of experience and autonomy for students, considerations related to intern well-being, ethical considerations, and considerations related ACCES-VR needs, policies, and practices.
 - Consider possibilities of the program having set locations for students to access for practicum/internship sites; development of further relationships with community rehabilitation provides. This would make the practicum/internship process less stressful. Consider enhancing involvement of the program in this process.
 - Consider fairness of procedures, practices, affiliation agreements across practicum/internship sites.
- **Disability accommodations and related needs**
 - Accommodations related to any disability: physical, mental, language, or cultural barriers.
 - Improved supports for studies with disabilities in terms of transportation (for all university); set aside funds for travel expenses while in practical experiences (i.e., practicum/internship)
 - Hosting online check-ins for students with disabilities to check in on student needs; to grow sense of community.
 - Ensuring accessibility of documents in all classes.
- **(3x) Increasing the community feel for online students.**

- Perhaps optional monthly meetup sessions on Zoom for online students to interact together and informally discuss class/issues, etc., hosted by faculty and used to gather feedback.
- **Knowledge of rehabilitation counseling field and opportunities**
 - Improved differentiation between the counseling fields (e.g., rehab, mental health, school, etc.).
 - Information on different pathways after graduation.
 - Opportunities for current students to meet with graduates from different employment tracks, to have firsthand knowledge of future options.
- **Expediting feedback and grading**
 - Online students feedback: sometimes feel campus students given priority for prompt responsiveness and grading; this could reduce student anxiety.
 - Online students more immediate responses to emails (same day or 1-2 days).
 - Expediting grading.
- **CRC Preparation, Networking for students related to the CRC exam.**

Systematic Survey of Supervisors and Employers (2023-2024 survey results):

- **The 2023-2024 Survey of Supervisors and Employers:**
 - 93% of respondents had supervised our student interns; 62% had employed our student graduates ($n = 16$).
 - 93.8% of the respondents had reported that they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with our rehabilitation counselor interns and graduates professional competence (6.3% neutral).
 - 100% of respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the overall performance of our rehabilitation counselor interns and graduates.
 - 100% of respondents stated that our counselor training was “good” or “excellent” compared to other rehabilitation counseling programs (of those who had other programs to compare against).
 - Strengths of the Program:
 - (6x) students are professional (eager to learn punctual, receptive to feedback, respectful, prepared, maturity, organized), students have strong counseling skills training (e.g., empathy, person-centered approach, soft-skills, caring, etc.), good team-work, attention to detail, “impeccable knowledge base,” dedicated to the profession, good skills related to significant disabilities.
 - Good support provided by staff and faculty,
 - Needs of our Counselors:
 - Enhanced training for service youth and student populations (e.g., pre-employment transition services; (2x) case documentation, (2x) role of rehab counselor versus other counseling professions, micro-counseling skills, role of pre-employment in VR outcomes), working with large caseloads (case management), specific familiarity with ACCES-VR services, professional maturity from practicum to internship (notice they are less prepared in practicum).

- Perhaps streamlining the affiliation agreements and other approvals would be helpful for student.
- Emerging Needs in the Field:
 - (4x) Agencies are short-staffed (i.e., need for more VR counselors, lack of credentialed professionals); focus on burnout and retention; (3x) comorbidity of mental health and other compounding issues; VR services for those with mental health disorders, need for more VR counselors in substance use rehab centers (specialists VR counselors working with substance use and mental health comorbid), more training in “harm reduction” in substance use treatment, insufficient funding for providing services, influence of artificial intelligence on services,
- Emerging Needs Cultural Responsiveness or Disability Groups:
 - more DEI content and increased cultural competency/inclusive practice, LGBTQ+; justice involved services (i.e., criminal justice system-involved), awareness of veteran community (and families), bilingual disability service providers (particularly in rural areas), working with immigrant populations, language barriers, working with those with multiple disabilities, housing and transportation assistance, families seeking ASD diagnosis (advocating for ASD rather than other serious MHD diagnoses).
 - More representation of disability and diversity in rehab counselors.

Professional Counseling Membership:

- 2023 Program Graduate Survey (graduates from 2017 to 2023). Approximately 41% of graduates were members of professional organizations, including CRC, ACA, NRA.
- 2022 Program Graduate Survey (graduates from 2017 to 2021): 59% of graduates within the sample stated they were members of professional associations (e.g., ACA, NRA, NCRE, NRCA).
- 2023-2024 Current Student Survey: Approximately 39% of current students ($n = 13$) reported being members of rehabilitation professional organizations (e.g., CRC, ACA, NRA, IARP, and NRCA). In 2022-2023, approximately 48% of students ($n = 21$) were members of professional organizations. Small decrease in participation by respondents.

II. Subsequent Program Modifications; and Proposed Modifications (Standard Section 4.C; Standard Section 4.D.2)

- **CACREP Credit Requirements: program to moved to a 60 credit hour program.**
This includes the new curriculum with 12 additional hours of coursework, the new course mapping and schedules for part-time and full-time study, and ensuring the curriculum change adheres to CACREP standards. (Objective 1)
 - Based on 2018-2023 program evaluation findings, three new courses were added to the program curriculum: **multicultural counseling, human growth and development, and case management, elective.** (Objective 1)
 - Based on 2022-2023 evaluation feedback themes and results, the following content areas are being emphasized in the 3 new courses and existing courses: *multicultural counseling, case management, transition services (pre-ETS), trauma-informed counseling and crisis interventions, practical counseling skills and strategies.* (Objective 1)
 - Based on feedback and new course/CACREP standards mapping, the **portfolio class was eliminated for students starting Fall 2023.**
- **Program Evaluation Participation:** Program evaluation participation has declined over the past three years of self-study, for students and external stakeholders. New strategies will be developed and initiated to improve responding.
- **Professional Organization Participation:** There were increases in membership in professional organizations in 2022-2023 with some reduction in the 2023-2024 survey (tentative findings based on lower sample size). This emphasis was incorporated into our student orientation and also within our Internship course content. Additional prospective strategies for increasing participation in professional organizations will be discussed. Participation in professional liability insurance for students will also be discussed. (program objective 5)
 - Approximately 41% of graduates were members of professional organizations in the 2023 study (70% in a 2022 study), including CRC, ACA, NRA, IARP, RESNA, and NRCA.
- **CRCC Exam Preparation Changes:** In 2023-2024, the program is initiating a number of strategies to assist in the earlier preparation of students for the CRCC exam. The new Case Management course will include a study plan assignment and the initiation of study groups (4 weeks; 1 hour sessions). Additionally, online materials have been updated within our new Brightspace platform, that include study guides, study content, recommendations for study materials/resources, and links to additional study materials.
- **Equity, Diversity, Justice, Inclusion:** The Graduate School of Education and related offices have introduced a several equity, diversity, social justice, and inclusion initiatives. The rehabilitation program has implemented a number of actions aligned with these initiatives (Objective 2 and Objective 4).
 - The Graduate School of Education's Dean's Lecture Series is being offered to all rehabilitation counseling students. This series focuses on equity, diversity, social justice, and inclusion.

- As part of our Graduate School of Education-wide initiatives to address equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion, the Rehabilitation Counseling Program is engaged in on-going critical review of course content, syllabi, and delivery, to better reflect current and projected needs for multicultural counseling practice, promotion of pluralistic ideals, and the needs of diverse students. (Objective 2 and 4)
- The GSE initiated a “Making Change that Matters: Teach-In” in the Fall 2023 semester; all classes were cancelled and students attended an in-person, live streamed, full-day event. <https://ed.buffalo.edu/teach-in>
- Supported by data showing the demographics of our program student body have become more diverse with regard to race and ethnicity, the program has made initiatives and modifications in response. A focus in our program objectives on attracting and retaining a diverse students and faculty. Our program has submitted a program revision proposal to the UB Graduate School for the addition of two courses that assist to increase the focus on multicultural counseling and equity, diversity, justice, and inclusion. The program has added a multicultural counseling course to the required curriculum. Additionally, the new case management course has been proposed, which will feature three areas of focus: 1) equity, diversity, inclusion, 2) counseling practice, and 3) disability and rehabilitation (Objective 2 & 4)
- **Course Content Changes/Prospective Changes:** Based on 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 program evaluation and survey data, numerous updates to course content are being made or considered on a continuing basis including:
 - case management
 - case documentation
 - mental health (DSM-V)
 - substance use rehabilitation (including harm reduction context; vocational rehabilitation context)
 - multicultural counseling competencies, LGBTQ+ awareness
 - trauma-informed care, crisis-intervention
 - WIOA, transitions service provision, Pre-ETS
 - case conceptualization/formulation,
 - specific counseling strategies and interventions
 - State vocational rehabilitation agency functions and related laws
 - Housing and emergency aid resources and referral
 - Self-care, burnout, secondary trauma
 - Role of rehabilitation counselors, scope of practice, job opportunities for rehabilitation counselors, comparisons to other fields

III. Other Substantial Program Changes and Initiatives (Standard Section 4.D.3)

Revision to one of the KPIs:

KPI (2F2h; KPI 3): Demonstrated understanding of social justice and advocacy issues and showed skill in helping clients overcome barriers.

Faculty and Staff Changes:

- Dr. Courtney Ward-Sutton was hired as an Assistant Professor (core faculty) and started August 2022.
- Dr. Rebecca Jacob was hired as an Assistant Clinical Professor, starting August 2023.
- Dr. Tikana Truitt was hired as our new Clinical Coordinator; Jennifer Dexheimer assumed another role within the department (i.e., Mental Health Counseling).
- Dr. Scott Sabella continued the Program Director role starting in the Fall 2021 (typical 3-year term).
- Dr. Omayra Munoz-Lorenzo and Dr. Courtney Ward Sutton both active on the RSA Scholarship grant.

Scholarship Opportunities:

- **Scholarship Awards:** The Rehabilitation Counseling Program received a Rehabilitation Long-Term Training grant from the U.S. Department of Education to provide scholarships for master's level rehabilitation counseling students. In the 2022-2023 academic year years we funded 16 scholars full tuition and fees (all scholars part time). We had 10 scholars graduate in 2022-2023. We started 8 new scholars from the Spring 2023 through the Fall 2023. The outreach for this scholarship has contributed to increased applications and enrollment of a more diverse student body in our program. (addressing student feedback related to financial supports; and increasing diversity; Objective 2).
- **Scholarship Stipends:** The Rehabilitation Counseling Program is collaborating with School of Nursing on a U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration grant that provides training and scholarship stipends for students during their internships. The project provides advanced supplemental training in prevention and treatment of substance use disorders (including opioid use disorders) through work in integrated behavioral health settings. We have had participation by campus and distance students in this program, and 2 in 2023-2024 (Objective 2)

Program Policy and Practice Changes:

- **Program Orientation:** Fall 2023, the new student orientation was held in two separate formats to accommodate our digital learners and campus learners. Campus students met for school, department, and program orientation activities. Distance, digital delivery students met for live streamed school and department meetings, followed by a dedicated Zoom conference orientation meeting.
- **Professional Behavior Expectations:** Based on our program evaluation activities from 2022-2024, we have revised our policies with regard to Professional Behavioral Expectations for our RC program students. Revisions were incorporated into our student handbook and internship syllabi for the 2023-2024 academic year.
- **Transitions/Youth Services:** Supported by our evaluation data showing increased emphasis on youth in transition in field agencies and the new case management course, will incorporate a section related to transition services, IEPs, and pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS). Additionally, our program hired a new

faculty member with extensive experience counseling youth with disabilities (Fall 2023 start).

- **Course Mapping Changes:** We are currently revising our course map to reduce complexity, to reduce the number of standards that are incorporated in the practicum and internship courses, and to remap based on the 60 credit hours program. Note that the portfolio course was removed from the curriculum in the 2023-2024 to allow for other, more critical coursework, including multicultural counseling and case management. This will necessitate a change in one of the measures of student key performance indicators starting Fall 2023.
- **Practicum and Internship Forms and Process Revisions:** Revisions have been made to the Practicum/Internship Placement Guidelines and forms for 2023-2024. Evaluation feedback from students has led to changes to the forms and process that are used within the practicum and internship courses (CACREP onsite review feedback, student feedback, supervisor feedback).
 - Modifications include changes to our site supervisor agreements, increasing the efficiency of the supervisor evaluations of students (electronic format), moving to electronic timesheets and signatures, and reducing the number of required forms. The electronic systems allow for more effective tracking and more efficient approval processes.
 - Additional changes to processes within internships included the allowance of group supervision time to count toward indirect hours and a change to an electronic timesheets system to increase efficiency and student user-friendly use by supervisors and students (feedback from students and supervisors).

Proposed 2024-2025 Program Objectives

(TBD)