

REHABILITATION COUNSELING PROGRAM

ANNUAL REPORT 2023–
2024



School for Global Inclusion and Social Development
College of Education and Human Development

University of Massachusetts Boston

Rehabilitation Counseling Program Annual Report

2023–2024

August 2024

The University of Massachusetts Rehabilitation Counseling program is a 60-credit Master's degree program preparing graduates to support people with disabilities to lead productive and fulfilling lives, including working at integrated and competitive jobs in their communities. The program has two tracks: a clinical track and a vocational track. The clinical track prepares students to work with clients with mental health disabilities, and the vocational track prepares students to work in the state-federal rehabilitation system.

The faculty of the UMass Boston CACREP accredited Rehabilitation Counseling program is dedicated to engaging in ongoing program assessment and evaluation to continuously improve the learning experiences of our students. As part of this process, we are providing an annual report on our program evaluation activities to students, other stakeholders and the public.

Student achievements:

A number of rehabilitation counseling students/graduates have already begun to make an impact on the field:

- A '24 graduate was awarded a very prestigious LEND (Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and other Disabilities) Fellowship funded through the US Department of Human Services
- A current student was awarded a 2023 National Board for Certified Counselors Minority Fellowship for Addictions Counselors.
- Another '24 graduate, presented her research as a poster at the Consortium of MS Centers Conference in Tennessee. The abstract will be published in the International Journal of Multiple Sclerosis Care (IJMSC). In addition, the student presented a paper at a pre-conference presentation at The American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) conference in April in New Orleans, as well as showcased some of her work at the UMass Boston, College of Education and Human Development, Research Extravaganza event in April 2024.
- One '24 graduate and another '23 graduate were admitted to counseling/clinical-oriented doctoral programs.
- Seventy five percent of students passed the Certified Rehabilitation Counseling exam (2022-2023 our most recent data). This compares very favorably to the national average pass rate of 53%.

Accreditation

This academic year 2023- 2024 saw the culmination of the reaccreditation of the program by CACREP (Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Education Programs). The program has been fully accredited as both a Rehabilitation Counseling program and Clinical Rehabilitation for a further 8 years. This accreditation is an acknowledgement of the most rigorous criteria of over 200 standards and assures the ongoing quality of the program. The program is accredited for a further 8 years until 2032.

Faculty:

The program saw the addition of another core faculty member in Spring '24, Dr. Danielle Ayeh, who has been appointed as a (full-time lecturer) to the university. Her position is a shared appointment within the College of Education and Human Development, including the Counseling and School Psychology Department and SGISD. Dr. Ayeh replaces Dr. Sheila Fesko who provided leadership and guidance to the program for many years before her retirement in May 2023. Dr. Ayeh joins Dr. Soldner and Dr. Peter as core rehabilitation counseling program faculty. Their efforts are complemented by an additional four part-time faculty, all of whom are qualified rehabilitation counselors.

Dr. Soldner took a sabbatical in Spring 2024 and the focus of his efforts was on co-authoring several chapters as part of an edited book titled, *Clinical Supervision: A Handbook for Counselors*. Dr. Soldner also co-authored several other manuscripts on topics generally devoted to supervision and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

It is with gratitude and sadness that the program farewells Dr. Hershenson, who has been a senior lecturer in the program for more than 20 years. Dr. Hershenson is retiring, and his wisdom will be greatly missed.

Grants:

The program has two US Department of Education long term training grants from the Rehabilitation Services Administration through September 2025. A six-year, \$1,200,000 grant pays partial tuition for students in the vocational track, and a five-year, \$900,000 grant pays partial tuition for students in the clinical track. Both grants expire in September 2025. In this grant cycle, since 2019 we have provided RSA funding for 59 students.

[Key Program Statistics from the Past Academic Year, 2023–2024](#)

In Fall 2023, there were:

- 23 students in the Clinical Track
- 14 students in the Vocational Track
- 4 Certificate students
- 2 students on a leave of absence for personal reasons, 1 student deferred
- 2 students who withdrew from the program for personal reasons

Graduates

A total of 15 students graduated from the program this academic year.

The job placement rates for our 15 graduates in the academic year 2023–2024 is 93% (14 students), with one student commencing doctoral studies in the Fall.

The number of students who received a RSA scholarship in Fall 2023:

- 13 students in the vocational grant
- 10 students in the clinical grant

The acceptance rate into the program for the past academic year: 62%

Fieldwork

There were 13 fieldwork placements this past year: 5 in state VR agencies, 3 with community health centers, 4 with for-profit counseling organizations (LLC), and 1 in a psychiatric hospital.

Recruitment and Applicant Selection Activities

The following recruitment activities were undertaken:

- Bi-monthly Zoom/in person informational webinars during the Fall and Spring Semesters.
- Individual meetings with prospective students.
- Twice yearly email to the Community Rehabilitation Programs in Massachusetts.

[Program Evaluation Activities](#)

As part of the program's commitment to ongoing continuous improvement and program evaluation, each Summer, a comprehensive analysis of data collected throughout the previous year is conducted to evaluate the program's goals, student learning outcomes, and alignment with CACREP standards.

Sources of Program Evaluation Data

- Institutional data/student demographics
- Course grades
- Professional dispositions/remediation plans monthly faculty review meetings
- Quality of the case conceptualizations during the practicum and internships
- CRC exam pass rate
- Site supervisor Fieldwork evaluations
- Review of data from the Supervision Assist platform
- Capstone quality
- Graduating student exit survey
- Student self-evaluation at completion of field work

See the formal evaluation tabulated at the end of this document.

Key Program Strengths

- Quality of the students and their achievements in the past year, noted above.
- Quality of the program curriculum as acknowledged by the recent re-accreditation. The program incorporates a range of evidence-based practices, including motivational interviewing, psychiatric rehabilitation approaches, and supported employment.
- The job placement rate of graduates indicates that graduates have the skills and knowledge to meet the demand of counselors in the labor market, with all students finding employment in the field except for the student who will be commencing doctoral studies in the Fall.
- The use of inter-teaching as an evidence-based teaching technique in many of the courses has ensured student engagement with the learning materials and strong grades in the coursework.
- The high quality of the practicum/internship sites for students is reflective of the university systems/personnel that ensure optimal student professional growth including: ensuring experienced, licensed and qualified university instructors; qualified site-supervisors who undertaking a supervision training program through the university; students have sufficient client contact hours; site supervisors provide regular weekly supervision; fieldwork sites provide a sufficient range of opportunities to ensure that the student can fully develop as a professional counselor.

Evaluation update from actions planned AY 2022–23

- Last academic year, it was evident that a significant proportion of site-supervisors did not complete the supervision training requirement. As incentive for site-supervisors to complete such training, the policy AY 2022–2023 was that the university would pay for online training for site-supervisors from an external training entity. However, the UMB payment/reimbursement mechanism was unwieldy, and site-supervisors did not use this opportunity. The program has made changes for AY 2023, so that supervisor training is online and readily available through Supervision Assist, the platform used by the supervisors to upload information regarding the students.
- Last academic year, it was recommended that revisions be made to the course COU 601 Research and evaluation in psychology. Using student feedback regarding the course, the program substantially revised the curriculum and teaching methods and it was taught Summer 2023 with significant improvement to student evaluation. The program will continue to use this course template moving forward.
- Last academic year, although all of the students passed the capstone project, it was evident that capstones focusing on professional projects were of a lower quality. In response to this issue, the guidelines for the capstone, and particularly the professional project, were revised and added to the student handbook for Fall 2023. More details describing the expectations and scope of the projects were developed. In addition, grading rubrics were provided to give further guidance to students so that they can produce a capstone that fully integrates their learning in the program.
- Last year, a concern was raised that students did not fully understand the professional dispositions assessment although it is clearly outlined in the student handbook. In response, expectations regarding professional dispositions were be inserted into the course REHAB 611 in

Fall 2023 and will be part of the course on an on-going basis. Additional information about professional dispositions was added to the student orientation beginning Spring 2023.

- An examination of the field-placement sites indicates that 10 of the 15 students in 2022–2023 undertook internships at a state-federal rehabilitation program or a community rehabilitation program. But once again, only one student completed a field placement at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, an historically major employer of graduates. This past year, the program faculty had 3 meetings with the newly appointed training officers at MRC to continue to build a relationship with a view to increase field placement opportunities for students.

Reflection of continued efforts toward program improvement

- In the past year, one student did not meet the professional dispositions criteria. As part of the remediation plan, the student was provided with a mentor and counseled toward taking a semester leave so that the personal issues can be resolved. The student has re-engaged in the program Fall 2023 and is on schedule to graduate in May 2024. It would assist in the program evaluation process to have professional dispositions information digitized so that this information can be readily collated and used for evaluation purposes.
- As indicated above, 10 of the 15 students in 2022–2023 undertook internships at a state-federal rehabilitation program or a community rehabilitation program. Given the emphasis of these programs on transition youth and feedback from the Advisory Board, the program has committed to developing a course on transition of youth from school to employment. This course will be an elective for students in the vocational track and the goal is submit the new course to governance in September 2024.
- In March 2022, the CRCC issued new knowledge domains for the Rehabilitation Counseling profession. At the completion of the CACREP accreditation process, it will be vital that the program examines the current curriculum in light of these changing professional expectations.
- A review of the Key Performance indicators from the site supervisor and student self-evaluations suggest indicate that students are graduating with the necessary skills to be effective rehabilitation counsellors.

Table 1: Overview of Program Objectives and outcomes

Program Objective	KPI	Outcome Data 2024
a. Graduates of the program will: Demonstrate an ability to empower individuals with disabilities to select and implement life	KPI-4: Students support individuals with disabilities to access meaningful	<i>Feedback from final internship evaluations for the following criteria, graded from 1-4:</i> Uses psychoeducation and empowerment strategies with clients (3.2 supervisor evaluation, 3.1 student self evaluation)

goals congruent with individual values, beliefs, and lifestyles. For many persons with disabilities, this includes support for access to meaningful education, employment, and independent living arrangements that match their interests and abilities.

education, employment and independent living arrangements that match their interests and abilities

Establishes relationships in such a manner that a therapeutic working alliance can be formed (supervisor evaluation 3.5, 3.5 student self evaluation)

Responds to client's feelings in a therapeutic manner (supervisor evaluation 3.3, 3.2 student self evaluation)

4. Shows congruence and genuineness (supervisor evaluation 3.5, 3.4 student self evaluation)

Communicates empathy (supervisor evaluation 3.6, 3.3 student self evaluation)

Responds to clients with clinical intention (supervisor evaluation 3.3, 3.2 student self evaluation)

Is aware of information regarding community resources to make appropriate referrals (supervisor evaluation 3.0, 3.0 student self evaluation)

Advocates for clients and services that are equitable and responsive (supervisor evaluation 3.5, 3.1 student self evaluation)

88% of students in REHAB 612 Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment received a grade of A- or higher

91% of students in REHAB 613 Vocational Development and Career information received a grade of A- or above.

b. Be able to conceptualize and implement rehabilitation counseling services and interventions for people with disabilities from a holistic and

KPI-3: Human Growth and Development: Students demonstrate an ability to conceptualize and implement rehabilitation/

Feed back from final internship evaluations for the following criteria, graded from 1-4:

Is able to conceptualize client symptoms and discuss the differential diagnosis with collaborating professionals (supervisor evaluation 3.2, 3.0 student self evaluation)

developmental perspective.

mental health counseling services and interventions for people with disabilities from a holistic and developmental perspective.

100% of students successfully completed all the case-conceptualization assignments in the internship course

100% students passed the capstone requirement which required a demonstration of the ability to implement an aspect of rehabilitation counseling

69% of students in REHAB 620 Human Growth and Development received a grade of A- or above

c. Develop a professional counseling identity and demonstrate the ability to function ethically and effectively within settings that offer vocational rehabilitation, counseling, advocacy, and/or related services to diverse populations.

**KPI-1:
Professional Counseling Orientation and Ethical Practice:**

Students develop a professional counseling identity and demonstrate the ability to function ethically and effectively within setting that offer vocational rehabilitation, counseling, advocacy, and/or related services to diverse populations.

Feedback from final internship evaluations for the following criteria, graded from 1-4:

Demonstrates the ability to apply and adhere to ethical and legal standards (supervisor evaluation 3.5, 3.1 student self evaluation)

94% of students in REHAB 603 Foundations of Rehabilitation received a grade of A- or above

100% of students received a satisfactory grade for REHAB 611 Portfolio

d. Identify and implement a range of assessment, counseling, and case management strategies applicable

**KPI-5:
Counseling and helping relationships:**

Students identify and

Feedback from final internship evaluations for the following criteria, graded from 1-4:

Applies knowledge of health policy, financing, and regulatory processes to improve service delivery opportunities in clinical mental health counseling

in a pluralistic society with individuals and groups to promote change and growth.

implement a range of counseling and case-management strategies applicable in a pluralistic society to promote change and growth.

KPI-7: Assessment and Testing:

Students identify and implement a range of assessment strategies applicably in a pluralistic society.

(supervisor evaluation 3.1, 3.1 student self evaluation)

Applies current record-keeping standards (supervisor evaluation 3.3, 3.1 student self evaluation)

Demonstrates skill in conducting an intake interview, a mental status evaluation, a biopsychosocial history, a mental health history, and a psychological assessment for treatment planning and caseload management (supervisor evaluation 3.3, 3.1 student self evaluation)

Demonstrates appropriate use of diagnostic tools (supervisor evaluation 3.2, 3.1 student self evaluation)

81% of students in COU 605 Principles of Vocational, Educational and Psychological Assessment received a grade of A- or above

72% of students in REHAB 610 Ethics and Case management received a grade of A- or above

74% of students in REHAB 615 Counseling Theories received a grade of A- or above

71% of students in REHAB 614 Motivational Interviewing received a grade of A- or above

90% of students in COU 653 Cultural Diversity in Counseling received a grade of A- or above

e. Demonstrate respect for the impact of social and cultural factors on human behavior and the role of individual differences in establishing and working toward counseling objectives.

KPI-2: Social and Cultural Diversity:

Students demonstrate respect for the impact of social and cultural factors on human behavior and the role of individual differences in establishing and working toward

counseling
objectives