

Alabama State University  
Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling Program  
Department of Rehabilitation Studies  
College of Health Sciences

**Annual Report  
2023-2024**

**Mission:**

The mission of the Master of Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) Program is to prepare admitted students to become professional rehabilitation counselors who work in partnership with people with disabilities. The primary ongoing goals of the MRC Program include: **1.** Developing and maintaining an educational curriculum focused on effective student learning and development in rehabilitation counseling; **2.** Preparing students to become professionals who are committed to effectively partnering with people with disabilities in achieving their maximum vocational, psychological, social, and economic independence; and **3.** Creating a multicultural learning environment that embraces empowering students to become professionals who facilitate empowerment for consumers with disabilities and their communities.

**State of the Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling (MRC) Program:**

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the unit served 24 students. The students comprised 2 cohorts (Cohort 16 and Cohort 17). Seven students from Cohort 16 completed their coursework during the 2023-2024 academic year. Six of the seven graduates obtained employment in a rehabilitation counseling-related field (employment rate, 86 %). None of the graduates elected to pursue doctoral studies at this time. The program continues its efforts to increase its national exam pass rates (currently under 50%) by offering prep materials at no cost, making relevant changes to the curriculum, adding an exam prep folder to Canvas, adding exam preparation assignments to two courses, and routinely reviewing its text book selection. The CRC exam is a very challenging assessment, with a national pass rate of 65%. The exam domains include: professional orientation and ethical practice; evidence-based practice counseling theories and techniques; group work and family dynamics; crisis and trauma counseling and interventions; psychosocial aspects of chronic illness and disability; assessment, career development and job placement; demand-side employment; community resources and partnerships; rehabilitation, disability, and healthcare management; medical aspects of individuals with chronic illnesses and disabilities; and research, methodology, and performance management.

The MRC program has three full-time core faculty members. Dr. Danita Stapleton is the Unit Coordinator. Dr. Dothel Edwards and Dr. Mary-Anne Joseph are seasoned faculty members who are instrumental in ensuring proficient program operations to include instructional design, recruitment and retention endeavors, establishing and maintaining collaborative and community relationships, and accreditation compliance. The program has one associate faculty, Dr. Angela Hall. Dr. Sekeria Bossie was recently appointed as Clinical Coordinator for the Department of Rehabilitation Studies. She will be instrumental in securing and evaluating clinical sites. The program's curriculum is 60 credit hours (which includes 3 courses from the graduate program in Clinical Mental Health).

The Program is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The program was reaccredited fall 2022. One faculty member now serves as peer reviewer for CACREP and has completed two reviews.

The MRC program uses aggregate student assessment data, demographic and relevant student characteristics data, and systemic follow-up data to evaluate program effectiveness. More specific measures that are utilized to inform program improvements include professional development disposition ratings, student learning objectives, demographic trends, stakeholder surveys, and stakeholder forums. The Unit continues to benefit from formal and informal feedback from stakeholders to include current students, program alumni, employers of our students, advisory board members, and clinical placement supervisors. The MRC faculty conducts ongoing assessments of various program components as depicted in the table below. Evaluation outcomes are used for program improvement. Program improvement endeavors target student development/training and improving the overall graduate program experience.

**Program Evaluation (Academic Year 2023-2024):**

<b>Evaluation Measure</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>Subsequent Program Modifications or Substantial Program Changes</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Demographic Trends</b>	The demographics of prospective and accepted students are tracked annually.	<p>African American students from underserved communities continue to predominately apply and be accepted for admission to the MRC program. These students are diverse as it relates to gender, ability, and life experiences.</p> <p>Total number of candidates (applicants) for AY 2023-2024: <b>17</b></p> <p>Race/Ethnicity: <b>16</b>African Americans</p> <p>Students with Disability: <b>4</b></p> <p>Gender: <b>3</b> Males, <b>14</b> Females.</p>	Unit faculty and staff have increased recruitment efforts at predominately white institutions in the Southeast, while continuing to target students at HBCUs and minority serving institutions. We have also been in contact with military education offices in the Southeast.	Despite having 17 candidates for the program, only 14 students were accepted and actually started the program. Three of the students decided to delay pursuing their degree until a later time. We will continue to maintain communication with these individuals.
<b>Professional Development and Disposition Ratings</b>	Administered twice annually	<p>No students were dismissed from the program due to the demonstration of improper professional dispositions. The mean score on the professional development and disposition ratings was <b>3.45</b> on a Likert scale of 4.</p> <p>This rating is used to evaluate students primarily in 6 areas:</p>		Students are rated at the conclusion of their second semester, and during their internship semester.

		respect and diversity, principles and ethics, commitment to professional development, advocacy, professional practice, and interpersonal relations.		
<b>Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)</b>	3 learning objectives were targeted for annual assessment	<p>I. RCOU 518 (Multicultural Counseling Issues)</p> <p>Students will earn at least a score of 80 out of 100 on the Racial Identity Reflection Paper.</p> <p>SLO data was analyzed through manual Canvas gradebook review and using Canvas Analytics.</p> <p>N=8 Success target met: Yes Mean Score = 90</p> <p>II. RCOU 511 (Foundations of Rehabilitation Counseling)</p> <p>Students will apply APA (7<sup>th</sup> Edition) guidelines when writing a 15-page literature review on a pre-approved topic related to rehabilitation counseling. 85% of students will obtain 80% or higher on the literature review.</p> <p>SLO data was analyzed through manual Canvas</p>	Students are also continually exposed to research and writing opportunities and mentorship (i.e. participation in college and professional research activities) to aid with continued growth in the measured SLO areas.	Learning outcomes, data analyses, and plans for continued improvement were entered into the Institution's 2023-2024 Continuous Improvement Plan/Report (Educational Programs).

		<p>gradebook review and using Canvas Analytics.</p> <p>N= 9 Success target met: Yes Mean Score= 83</p> <p>III. RCOU 531 Job Development and Placement</p> <p>80% of the first semester students will score a rating of 80 or above on the job analysis assignment.</p> <p>SLO data was analyzed through manual Canvas gradebook review and using Canvas Analytics.</p> <p>N= 11 Success target met: Yes Mean Score= 85</p>		
<b>Surveys of Graduates</b>	Annually	<p>24 out of 36 graduates (alumni) responded to a Qualtrics survey during this reporting interim (67% response rate). These students graduated between spring 2018 and spring 2021.</p> <p>90 % of respondents reported knowledge satisfaction as being “good to extremely good” in the following areas :</p> <p>Assessment skills to include diagnostic interviews, mental status exams, symptom inventories, psycho-educational and personality assessments,</p>	None	Student feedback is being used to guide continued faculty and program development to further strengthen areas rated as “average.”

		<p>biopsychosocial histories, assessments for treatment planning, and assessments for assistive technology needs. 10% reported knowledge satisfaction as being “average”.</p> <p>90% of respondents reported knowledge satisfaction as being “good to extremely good” in the following area: Program evaluation &amp; research skills 10% reported knowledge satisfaction as being “average”.</p> <p>90% of respondents reported knowledge satisfaction as being “good to extremely good” in the following area: Transferable skills, functional assessments, and work-related supports for achieving and maintaining meaningful employment. 10% reported knowledge satisfaction as being “average”.</p>		
<b>Surveys and Engagement of Practicum &amp; Internship Supervisors &amp; Community Partners</b>	Annual events	An annual spring Advisory Board meeting is held to solicit feedback on the program’s reputation and on how the program can better prepare students to meet the needs of agencies and their consumers. In addition, for MRC faculty members, advisory board membership comprises representatives from the following agencies: Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Governor’s Office on Disability, Council on Substance Abuse,	None	

		<p>Alabama Department of Mental Health, and Independent Rights and Resources.</p> <p>Two Supervisor Training Sessions were hosted (spring and fall semester). All practicum and internship site supervisors were invited. During the sessions training on student needs and supervisor roles were provided, and supervisors were allotted time to ask questions and give feedback.</p> <p>A survey was emailed to nine practicum and internship supervisors during AY 2023-2024 (100% response rate). Supervisors were asked to rate their levels of satisfaction in the following areas:</p> <p><u>Overall supervisory experience</u> (7 were “extremely satisfied”, 1 was “somewhat satisfied”).</p> <p><u>Student preparation for conducting initial interviews or intakes</u> (7 were “extremely satisfied”, 1 was “somewhat satisfied”).</p> <p><u>Student preparation for involvement in vocational assessment and job placement/preparation activities</u> (7 were “extremely satisfied”, 1 was “somewhat satisfied”).</p> <p><u>Student preparation for involvement in individual or group counseling/educational</u></p>		
--	--	---	--	--

		<p>activities (8 were “extremely satisfied”</p> <p><u>Student preparation for reviewing case documentation, reporting and rendering appropriate treatment or service decisions</u> (7 were “extremely satisfied”, 1 was “somewhat satisfied”).</p>		
<p><b>Survey of Current Students</b></p>	<p>Annually</p>	<p>Twenty-one students were emailed a survey about their experience in the MRC program. 19 students reported (91% response rate).</p> <p>The results are as follows:</p> <p><b>89% of the students reported</b> “very much so” when asked about the following:  <u>Having opportunities to hear guest lecturers who represent the rehabilitation counseling field.</u></p> <p><b>11% reported</b> moderately so.</p> <p><b>79% of the students reported</b> <u>being given a student handbook that includes the program’s mission statement, goals and objectives, and policies.</u> <b>4.8% reported</b> <u>not being given a student handbook.</u></p> <p><b>94% of the students reported</b> <u>having a faculty adviser who is knowledgeable of academic policies, program curricula, and graduation requirements.</u></p> <p><b>5% of the students responded</b> “not at all”.</p>		<p>Suggestions and needs:</p> <p>“... more CRC preparation...paid internships... more opportunities to practice counseling interventions... reduce courseload...offer courses more than once yearly...all asynchronous classes...”</p>

		<p><b>63% of the students reported</b> <u>that the instruction being received in the MRC program is adequately familiarizing me with the relevant aspects of the rehabilitation counseling field.</u> <b>32% reported “moderately so”, and 5% reported “slightly so”.</b></p> <p><b>79% of the students reported</b> “very much so” when asked about the following: <u>Faculty are accessible and reliable, consistently keeping class hours, office hours, and appointments.</u> <b>16% of the students responded “moderately so”, 5% of the students responded “not at all”.</b></p> <p><b>84% of the students reported</b> “<u>very much so</u>” when asked about the following: <u>Communication between students, faculty, and staff is positive with students being made aware of important program announcements in a timely manner.</u> <b>11% of the student responded</b> “moderately so”, and <b>5% responded “not at all”.</b></p>		
--	--	--	--	--

**Our 2018- 2021 graduates report the following program strengths:**

- Effective communication between staff and students.
- Supportive staff and the courses are very thorough.
- Career preparedness.
- Supportive and knowledgeable instructors, diversity in topics.
- STAFF.
- Prepares you to assist all individuals with disabilities.
- Professors and curriculum.



- Bringing in informative visitors from different agencies for career transparency in the rehabilitation field.
- Professors make the program strong.
- Caring staff.
- Program prepares you with the knowledge to advocate, knowledge of disability laws & regulations, as well as prepare you to perform in a diverse setting.
- Faculty, facility, internship advocacy.

### **Our 2018- 2021 graduates report the following program needs:**

- Social media presence to explain what we do and to introduce current students.
- SOCIAL MEDIA.
- Provide students with list of the many employment opportunities available once they finish the program.
- Funding and donations from alumni to improve education resources.
- At the time, more staff...Also better interaction and activities in the community with the student club.
- CRC preparation class in the curriculum.
- More hands-on activities. More outings to view the different type of jobs in the community.
- More hands-on activities versus lectures.
- Program should partner with various sectors for internships.
- (Optional) CRC mini sessions.

### **Program strengths as reported by current students:**

- Commitment of the faculty, extensive internship hours.
- Accreditation & distinguished faculty & high employment rates, post-graduation.
- Field experienced and compassionate instructors.
- The availability that we have with the instructors and how passionate they are about wanting us to succeed.
- Communication.
- Curriculum is appropriate and matches needed skillsets for employment; Professors are knowledgeable and competent.
- Communicate knowledge of all aspects of rehabilitation counseling.
- The program has been instrumental in me learning more about areas of disabilities. The 2nd strength is knowing this program makes a huge impact on the lives of many people in our communities.
- The information builds upon itself each semester and being online allows flexibility.
- I enjoy the small class size and I also like that we have opportunities to speak to practitioners within the profession.
- Specialized knowledge and career advancement in the profession.
- CRC preparation and very knowledgeable.

**Program needs as reported by current students:**

- Variety of instructors, improved use of the Canvas platform
- While specific areas for improvement are not explicitly detailed in the available sources, continuous program evaluation is essential. Engaging in regular assessments allows the faculty to identify strengths and weaknesses, facilitating informed decisions and necessary changes to enhance the program's quality.
- Most of the professors that I have had during this program have been unreliable and unclear with their teaching. Especially in courses featuring mind tap.
- We need to focus on getting the CRC passing rate up. The professors have done a great job getting us to look at the material but it needs to translate more. This can be asking a lot of the students but we need to be more proactive with study groups, and study material, and not be so relaxed when it comes to the test. There are so many resources out there to do well on the exam
- emails
- More hands-on opportunities given the online format -University technical support for professors
- The program needs an MRC Faculty person that is knowledgeable with the blind and people hard of hearing. More funding is needed to do more recruitment in and outside of the state of Alabama.
- It would be helpful for real life or recent examples of how to apply the information presented in the classroom could be discussed as well as possible strategies to differentiate the different theorists and theories.
- There is only one thing that I can think of. I understand the importance of understanding the psychological perspective and having a working foundation for interactions with our future clients. However, I would like for our assignments to align more with possible formatting of the CRC exam to aid us in prepping throughout the program.
- I can only think of one issue for me and It's taking four classes at a time per semester. -schedule

**Other:**

- The MRC faculty is awesome! They try their best to accommodate each and every student in the program and for that I applaud them all. It means a lot to have someone in your concern and truly have a genuine concern for you.

**The Unit held its Annual Retreat in July of 2023. The table below depicts strategic initiatives renewed and/or established for the MRC Program during the annual retreat:**

Strategic Initiative	Status: Scale of 1-5 ( <u>5</u> : Progress-- <u>3</u> : Some Progress-- <u>1</u> : No Progress) or N/A	Strategies or Action Plan
1.Maintain the Jasmine Marshall Foundation to afford students the opportunity to attend and present at local, state, and national conferences.	<u>3</u> : The current funds in the JMF exceeds \$5,000.	At least 3 MRC students will attend professional conferences or research days. The following expenses will be paid: registration, travel, printing and poster costs.

<p>2. Maintain 90% retention rate of optimal student enrollment: 30 for MRC Program.</p>	<p><u>5</u>: Active recruitment and retention plan.</p>	<p>2. Produce an annual recruitment and retention report by October 1 of each calendar year. The report will summarize recruitment and retention activities, outcomes, and growth projections.</p>
<p>3. Meet the application deadline for the next RSA grant which will afford students monies for books, tuition, in addition to a monthly stipend. This award will attract more students to the MRC program.</p>	<p><u>1</u>: No RSA grant announced since 2020.</p>	<p>3. Respond to RSA award announcement within 2 weeks of receipt.</p>
<p>4. Continue to establish and maintain quality practicum and internship sites by staying abreast of the formation of new agencies serving people with disabilities.</p>	<p><u>5</u>: Currently over 30 active clinical (placement) site contracts.</p>	<p>Increase number of clinical contracts for MRC students, by 6, each academic year.</p>
<p>5. Implement 2 graduate concentrations: Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing.</p>	<p><u>3</u>: Syllabi are 75% complete.</p>	<p>Submit the complete syllabi for 2 MRC concentrations to the COHS curriculum committee for review and approval by the start of summer 2025.</p>
<p>7. Maintain accreditation status of the MRC program.</p>	<p><u>5</u>: Program successfully reaccredited fall 2022.  Fall 2022 CACREP review resulted in <b>zero</b> deficits out of over 150 standards.</p>	<p>CACREP standards will be part of the agenda of each monthly Unit meeting.</p>
<p>8. Host annual Open House for prospective MRC students.</p>	<p><u>5</u>: MRC Open House was held February 2023.</p>	<p>Open House announcements will be circulated via Graduate Studies and in accordance with the annual student recruitment and retention plan.</p>

**During academic year 2023-2024, the program placed students for practicum and internship at the following agencies:**

Second Chance Foundation  
(Montgomery, Alabama)  
Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System  
(Biloxi, MS)

DisAbility Link (Decatur, Georgia)  
Alabama Institute for Behavior Health (Phenix City, Alabama)  
South East ADA Center (Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University)  
Gesher Human Services (Southfield, Michigan)  
Providence Staffing, LLC (Detroit, Michigan)  
APEX Family Healthcare Services (Stockbridge, Georgia)  
Office of Accessibility and Veteran Affairs (Alabama State University)  
JAG High School (Montgomery, Alabama)  
Alabama Department of Human Resources (Montgomery, Alabama)  
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Spokane, Washington)  
Montgomery 310 (Montgomery, Alabama)

**During academic year 2023-2024, program graduates were hired by the following agencies:**

Support Coordinator, Montgomery 310 (Montgomery, Alabama)  
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Veterans Health Administration (Sacramento, California)  
Mental Health Counselor, Alabama Institute for Behavior Health (Phenix City, Alabama)  
Financial Support Worker, Department of Human Resources (Montgomery, Alabama)  
Transition Specialist, Easterseals of Central Alabama (Montgomery, Alabama)  
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (Spokane, Washington)  
Research Assistant, South East ADA Center (Burton Blatt Institute at Syracuse University)  
Educator, Smiths Station High School (Smiths Station, Alabama)  
Admission Counselor/Laurel Heights Hospital (Druid Hills, Georgia)

**The following agencies have hired our 2018 – 2021 graduates:**

Veterans Affairs: 1-800-827-1000  
Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency 844-367-4872  
Alabama State University Upward Bound, TRIO Program 334-229-4800  
Youth Villages 615-250-7200  
NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY / 757-823-8152  
Health Services Inc. (334)420-5001  
Houston Housing Authority 713-260-0378  
Department of Veterans Affairs 331-302-1358  
IQVIA Biotech  
Phoenix (256) 880-0671  
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services 334-293-7064  
Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice 404-508-6500  
Montgomery Public Schools (334) 260-1000  
Dept of Veterans Affairs Veterans Readiness and Employment 6156956061  
Alabama Department of Rehabilitation 334-877-2930  
Dept. Of Veterans Affairs  
Alabama institute of deaf and blind

**Our 2018 – 2021 graduates hold the following positions:**

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

LifeSet Specialist

Director Of Sports Performance

Substance Abuse Counselor

Medication Assistance Case Manager

Family Self Sufficiency Specialist

Sr. Clinical Research Associate II

Employee Support Services Case Manager

Rehabilitation Counselor

Juvenile Detention Counselor

Site Coordinator

Case Manager