

Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education
Response to 10-Year Program Review Committee Report
Bachelor of Science (BS) in Rehabilitation Psychology
May 2, 2022

The Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education is grateful for the review and recommendations provided by the Review Committee Chair and members: Tracy Schroepfer, Professor, School of Social Work, Program Review Chair; Annette McDaniel, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, School of Human Ecology; and Julie Poehlmann-Tynan, Professor, Human Development and Family Studies, School of Human Ecology.

We appreciate the Review Committee's feedback on the strengths of the Rehabilitation Psychology program (diversity and flexibility of course offerings, uniqueness of the internship component, strong student advising, and inclusive environment) and their recognition that leadership is actively seeking to address challenges discussed in the report. In response to the review, we have provided a summary of our plans in each of the areas of recommendations.

Support for Underrepresented Minority (URM) Students

- *Survey current URM students to determine what support and resources they require to be successful in the program*
- *Develop a plan for how the second student services coordinator will provide specialized/structured support*

As part of the Rehabilitation Psychology program assessment and evaluation process, Student Experience Surveys are sent to current undergraduate students and to students who are planning to graduate. Students have the opportunity to share what they like most about the program, suggest program improvements, and provide explanations regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the program. In response to the Review Committee recommendations, the Rehabilitation Psychology Area plans to add a survey to this process specifically targeting current underrepresented minority students designed to understand their perspectives on the support and resources needed to be successful in the program. Survey results will be used to develop a plan for how the program and our recently-added second student services coordinator will provide specialized/structured student support. We will continue to follow up with students to evaluate progress as the recommendations are being implemented.

Internship Program and Undergraduate Research

- *Continue to work with the School of Education on increasing the number of paid internships*
- *Explore the costs of moving the internship documentation to an electronic process*
- *Explore the costs of creating an internship database that is updated prior to the beginning of a new academic year*
- *Survey past and current internship teaching assistants on what the strengths and challenges are of their position so that a plan for addressing them can be developed and resources necessary determined*
- *Strengthen the training provided to the teaching assistants*

- *Expand undergraduate research opportunities, especially given the high number of graduates who pursue graduate education*

Internships: The Rehabilitation Psychology program has been involved in the School of Education (SoE) internship initiative through participation in the SoE Internship Work Group and faculty interviews with the SoE regarding the Rehabilitation Psychology program internship structure. We plan to continue to work with the SoE on the goal of increasing the number of paid internships. As noted in our self-study, a challenge of the internship component of the program is the time and effort required to manage internship documentation for planning and reporting purposes. To address this challenge at all program levels, we are developing electronic processes for field placement documentation. We have started this development with the graduate field placements, and we will use similar processes for the undergraduate internships. To improve the current process of updating the internship information at the beginning of each academic year, we will explore the cost of creating an internship database and pursue the Academic Planning Council suggestion to work with Information Technology to further streamline and simplify the process. As another step to address these recommendations, the Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education Department will appoint a teaching assistant for overall administrative support to improve the processes for students, instructors/teaching assistants, and agency supervisors.

Teaching Assistants: Consistent with recommendations made by the review committee, the Rehabilitation Psychology program will survey past and current teaching assistants on the strengths and challenges of their positions. Based on the feedback, we will identify and plan for the necessary steps and resources to augment the current training provided in supervision coursework and in individual supervision and mentoring. The plan will include the Academic Planning Council's suggestions for development of additional opportunities for students to meet with their teaching assistants and consideration of teaching assistant training offered through Media, Education Resources, and Information Technology (MERIT) and the Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI).

Undergraduate Research Opportunities: As described in our self-study, the involvement of rehabilitation psychology undergraduate majors in faculty and PhD student research has not been extensive to date, but we see value in expanding these opportunities, both to benefit our students and to form faculty relationships with students who may be good candidates to proceed on to our graduate programs. Malachy Bishop, PhD, Professor and Rehabilitation Psychology Area Co-Chair, expanded research opportunities for undergraduate students in his past position as Director of Research at the University of Kentucky's University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). Given this experience, he has agreed to lead our efforts to consider ways to expand those opportunities to rehabilitation psychology majors here. We also plan to expand involvement of the Rehabilitation Psychology Advisory Committee of community leaders in our efforts to increase undergraduate research opportunities and initiatives.

Faculty

- *Work with School of Education Dean to increase the number of faculty so it is more commensurate with the number of students, the needs of the internship program, and marketing work that must be done to diversify the program's student population*

- *Seek diversity when hiring new faculty*

Through our work with the SoE Dean, the Rehabilitation Psychology Area is very pleased to have been able to hire three diverse and exceptional faculty since the Fall of 2020. These new faculty increase the number of Area faculty to be more commensurate with the number of students, the needs of the internship program, and the marketing work that must be done to diversify the program's student population. In our recent hires, the Rehabilitation Psychology Area systematically searched for diverse faculty candidates. First, in our recent search process, the search committee engaged in several strategies to ensure the diversity of the applicant pool. These included consultation with Kurt Rose, SoE Associate Director for Human Resources, immediately after receiving approval for the search, about processes we could engage in to ensure diversity. Among his recommendations were participation in the WISELY search committee workshop: "Searching for Excellence & Diversity". Each member of the search committee participated in this training. We also had Kurt Rose review and approve our recruitment plan, which incorporated recruitment efforts targeting professional meetings and conferences that would promote a diverse applicant pool. This included promoting the positions through professional networks outreach, placement in publications, and local and national associations, such as the National Association of Multicultural Rehabilitation Concerns (NAMRC), that ensured awareness of the position among diverse potential applicants. The committee was intentional in its commitment to prioritizing diversity in the applicant pool in developing the position criteria, in each committee meeting, and in all communications. These efforts resulted in a diverse applicant pool, as reflected in the candidate pool. As a result of our recent search, the Area has two faculty joining the Area in Fall 2022 who admirably fulfill our goal of hiring outstanding professionals with diverse personal, educational, and professional backgrounds, each of whom having distinguished herself through commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion in their research, teaching, and service endeavors. Each of the finalists will be capable of helping the Rehabilitation Psychology Area achieve the Area and Department goals related to our Bachelor of Science (BS) Program in Rehabilitation Psychology and our graduate programs.