

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
School of Health Professions
M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling
Clinical Mental Health Counseling Track
Annual Report: July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024

M.S. Program Overview:

Over the course of the 2023-2024 academic year, there were 115 students enrolled in the program including non-matriculated students. Students enrolled in the program represent a very diverse group including significant numbers of students representing minority groups, and identifying themselves as individuals with disabilities. The majority of students in the program are female.

All students complete a practicum and internship as part of their studies. A pool of qualified agency clinical supervisors is available for these clinical experiences. This includes supervisors who are program graduates. All new clinical supervisors must attend a clinical supervisor orientation before starting clinical supervision with students. This training is presented by practicum and internship faculty. Planning for clinical placements begins in the spring of each year. Students are required to complete the practicum and internship experiences in New Jersey or the surrounding region including downstate New York, eastern Pennsylvania, Delaware, and Maryland. Dr. Tameika Minor, our clinical coordinator, was able to place all students interested in starting the practicum and internship sequence this academic year in clinical placements. Our clinical placement starts with the practicum in the fall semester followed by the internship in the spring semester. It should be noted the internship experience involves one semester of full-time placement at the agency. The program has established Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with over 100 agencies in our geographic area for clinical placements.

The required New Student orientation was held virtually in September, 2023. The program included a welcome from Dr. Gill and faculty, a presentation by the Chair of the New Jersey Professional Examiners Committee on licensure, review of the Student Handbook by Dr. Oursler, information about various Rutgers services including the Rutgers library system, discussion about ethical obligations for counselors, an introduction to requirements and the placement process for the practicum and internship, and presentations about opportunities for students to work with faculty on research projects.

The required residency for online students was conducted on-campus this academic year in January, 2024. The program for the residency included a panel of graduates who talked about possible career paths, meetings with advisors, initial planning for the practicum and internship experiences, and information/preparation about the National Counselor Examination (NCE). Student evaluations of the residency experience were very positive.

Admissions and Graduation:

The program continued active recruitment efforts this past year. Recruitment efforts included SHP recruitment events with both virtual and on-campus open houses and virtual conferences such as the New Jersey Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association conference. Applications are accepted only for the fall semester. The deadline to apply is March 1. Admission to the program is competitive as we continued to receive large numbers of applications for the entering Fall 2024 class. We worked closely with the Admissions Office to facilitate review of applications with admission offers to applicants sent by mid-March and a deadline for the applicant's decision by April 15. The April 15 date was selected to be consistent with applicant decision dates for similar programs at other universities.

The M.S. program had a total of 36 graduates for this year. Students can complete the degree in two years of full-time attendance or in three years on a full/part-time basis. Attendance in the summer is required as certain courses are offered only in the summer semester. Students may take the degree in Piscataway on the Busch campus, in Camden at the Rutgers-Camden campus or online.

Information on retention and completion is below:

Student Completion Rate: Students Beginning in Years 2005 Through 2019

Year	Number in Beginning Cohort	In Five Years	Percent	In Six Years	Percent	In Seven Years	Percent	In Eight Years	Percent
2005	36	23	63.8	23	63.8	23	63.8	24	66.7
2006	24	17	70.8	17	70.8	17	70.8	17	70.8
2007	22	14	63.6	14	63.6	14	63.6	14	63.6
2008	29	19	65.5	19	65.5	19	65.5	19	65.5
2009	29	19	65.5	20	68.9	20	68.9	20	68.9
2010	17	14	82.3	15	88.2	15	88.2	15	88.2
2011	27	22	81.4	22	81.4	22	81.4	22	81.4
2012	30	23	76.6	23	76.6	23	76.6	23	76.6
2013	30	21	70	21	70	21	70.0	21	70.0
2014	39	24	61.5	24	61.5	21	61.5	21	61.5
2015	34	24	70.5	24	70.5	24	70.5	24	70.5
2016	36	28	77.8	28	77.8	29	80.5	29	80.5
2017	26	16	61.5	16	61.5	16	61.5		
2018	36	31	86.1	31	86.1				
2019	33	26	78.8						

Accreditation:

The program currently has an eight-year term of accreditation in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational

Programs (CACREP) with a specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. This is our only CACREP-accredited area of specialization. We have initiated the process for renewal of our accreditation.

In 2023-2024, the program had eight core faculty. Core faculty are listed below:

Janice Oursler, Ph.D., Program Director

Anthony Zazzarino, Ph.D. Assistant Director

Rhea Banerjee, Ph.D.

Aubrey Daniels, Ph.D.

Kaitlin Dietz, Ph.D.

SunHee Eissenstat, Ph.D.

Weili Lu, Ph.D.

Tameika Minor, Ph.D.

We hired two new core faculty, Dr. Banerjee and Dr. Dietz, following a national search. Additionally, there are Department faculty who teach selected courses in the program.

Grant Activities:

The program continued participation in 2023-2024 in the third year of a multi-year Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant entitled Rutgers University Behavioral Youth (RUBY) Collaborative. This project, funded as part of the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program focuses on interprofessional services for transition age youth and is in cooperation with the School of Social Work and the School of Nursing. Students participating in this project receive interprofessional experiential training at integrated, interdisciplinary placement sites serving underserved transition aged youth throughout the state of New Jersey. The goal of the project is to promote collaborative side-by-side learning and practice programming to prepare practitioners to provide team-based, person-centered, population-based, culturally-competent behavioral health interventions. Dr. Tameika Minor is the liaison for our program for the grant.

The program completed the fourth year and the fifth year of Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Long Term Training grants with Dr. Janice Oursler as the PI. RSA awarded the program a sixth year of funding for one of these grants, which had been projected to expire in September, 2024. Most grant funds are used for tuition scholarships for students in the master's program.

Dr. Weili Lu is the Principal Investigator (PI) for a three-year grant awarded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) to conduct a research study on Internet Assisted Career-Oriented Soft-skills Training (iCareer) for Transition Age Youth with Mental Health Conditions: A Randomized Controlled Trial.

Research and Scholarly Activities:

Core faculty are productive in research publications, and conference presentations. Students have opportunities to participate in research and other faculty-led projects. As a result of these efforts, students participated in the SHP Research & Scholarship Symposium as well as other conference poster presentations, and several publications had students as co-authors. Examples of faculty publications are listed below.

1. Lu, W., Oursler, J., Herrick, S. J., Gao, N., Diviney, J., Beninato, J., Minor, T., Wang, K., Santiago, G., & Parrott, J. S. (2023). Comparing telehealth-based vs. in-person soft skills training for persons with disabilities during COVID- 19: A pilot study. *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work*. DOI: [10.1080/01933922.2022.2158973](https://doi.org/10.1080/01933922.2022.2158973)
The Editorial Board of *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work* selected this article for the Journal Article of the Year award.
2. Lu, W., Caldwell, B., Gao, N., Oursler, J., Wang, K., Beninato, J., Srijevantham, J., Kumi, C., Sawyer, J., Giacobbe, G., Chen, Y., Lin, K. W., & Mueser, K. T. (2023). Healing trauma while staying at home: Using telehealth to conduct a brief treatment program for posttraumatic stress disorder. *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, 1–11. advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.3928/02793695-20231205-01>
3. Daniels, A.D., Nadermann, K., Beck, C., Zhai, Y. (2023). Utilizing the SAFE-T model and anti-racist counseling principles for suicide assessment and teaching counselors in training. *Journal of Counselor Preparation and Supervision*. <https://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/jcps/vol17/iss3/8/>
4. Eissenstat, S. J., Coduti, W. A., & Hayes, J. A. (2023). Predictors of self-harming behavior among college students with disabilities seeking counseling services. *Journal of Postsecondary Education and Disability*. 36(2), 167-178.
5. Minor, T. Lu, W., Kumi, C., & Yalamanchili, P. (2022). Retention analysis of faculty of color in rehabilitation education. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*. Online first. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00343552221124>
6. Zazzarino, A., Socha, C., Gillig, S. E., & Cingel, P. A. (2024). Treatment of co-occurring disorders. In D. Capuzzi & M.D. Stauffer. *Foundations of Addictions Counseling* (5th ed., pp. 235-253). Pearson.

Students participated in 12 poster presentations at the SHP Research and Scholarship Symposium in May, 2023. There were six poster presentations that included students at the 2023 National Association of Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers (NARRTC) conference in Washington, D.C. in April including presentation with students. Examples of conference and workshop presentations are listed below.

1. Oursler, J., Lu, W., Herrick, S., & Beninato, J. (Spring, 2023). Work-related soft skills for young adults with disabilities. (Workshop presentation). Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE), National Symposium on Rehabilitation Counseling Virtual Conference.
2. Lu, W., Oursler, J., Herrick, S.J., & Beninato, J. (2023, May 24). Focus groups on employment related soft skills for transition age youth with disabilities [Webinar]. National Association of People Supporting Employment First.
3. Zazzarino, A. (2023, January). A population at risk: Counseling sexual minorities with a serious mental illness. Presented at the International Arts, Humanities, and

Social Sciences Conference in Waikiki, HI.

4. Daniels, A.D., (2023, February). When families work together: Trauma, resiliency, and the family environment. Workshop presentation at the International Association for Marriage and Family Counselors Annual Conference.

Review of M.S. Program Objectives:

Consistent with the program mission, nine objectives have been established which guide program development. These objectives along with a summary of progress during the past year are listed below:

1. Preparing at the master's degree level highly qualified counselors prepared to work in a variety of community settings including working with persons from diverse populations including persons with disabilities.
 - Student clinical education takes place at a variety of sites including community-based agencies, state and federal government agencies, and other facilities throughout New Jersey and the surrounding area, according to the supervisor survey findings. As a result of the large number of affiliations, all students entering the practicum/internship sequence in Fall, 2024 were successfully placed. The number of clinical affiliations was expanded again this year and now totals more than 100 clinical affiliations specific to master's level counseling in community settings. Many agencies have multiple sites available for practicum and internship placements. Supervisor survey outcome results indicated clinical supervisors were satisfied with our training, materials, and communication.
 - Students have opportunities to participate in research and other faculty-led projects. Students participated with faculty in conference workshops and poster presentations and were co-authors of several publications. Additionally, Dr. Weili Lu and other core faculty members mentored several students in developing research skills.
 - Six students received education and experience in working in integrated substance use disorders (SUD) services as part of a multi-year Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant entitled Rutgers University Behavioral Youth (RUBY) Collaborative. This project, funded as part of the Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training (BHWET) Program, focuses on interprofessional services for transition age youth and is in cooperation with the School of Social Work and the School of Nursing. Dr. Tameika Minor is our coordinator for this project.
 - Student outcomes on the National Counselor Examination (NCE) continued to be similar to the national pass rate with 91% of our students successful on the NCE compared to a national pass rate of 92%.
 - Most responding graduates (93%) in our most recent alumni survey reported they are better prepared compared to graduates with other similar educational preparation. All responding alumni would recommend the program to prospective students.
 - Two new core faculty were hired following a national search.

- The program maintains accreditation from the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) in the area of Clinical Mental Health Counseling. The Department regularly conducts self-study activities to evaluate the quality of the program and to implement improvements as needed. Program evaluation reports are reviewed by faculty, the Department Chair, and the program's Advisory Committee.
2. Increasing the supply of qualified professionals with special expertise in counseling persons with disabilities to provide community-based counseling services for New Jersey and the surrounding region. As the only university in New Jersey offering graduate counseling education in this area, this degree addresses the long-standing shortage of master's level counseling practitioners with this expertise to serve communities in New Jersey. This includes increasing the supply of qualified practitioners throughout the state by offering the degree regionally at two campuses as well as online.
 - The program accepted students from various demographic backgrounds, resulting in a highly diverse cohort to serve the diverse population of New Jersey and the surrounding regions. We encourage applications from diverse backgrounds including non-traditional students or first-generation students.
 - Students were able to complete the degree at either the Piscataway and/or Camden campuses as well as online. There were 36 graduates in the 2023-2024 academic year.
 - Applications remained high in 2023-2024 for the Fall 2024 entering class. This reflects ongoing recruitment activities to enroll a diverse student body and to prepare and graduate qualified professionals with special expertise in providing counseling services to individuals with disabilities in New Jersey and the surrounding area.
 - Of the graduates in 2023-2024, follow-up studies revealed a combined rate of 91% of graduates either enrolled in a doctoral program or of those seeking employment securing employment in the field within six months of graduation. This assisted in increasing the supply of qualified professionals to provide counseling services for New Jersey and the surrounding area.
 - The program worked with SHP and Rutgers-Camden administrations over the course of this academic year to make arrangements for the program to be offered on the Camden campus. This started in Fall 2023. The move to a Rutgers campus in South Jersey is expected to lead to program growth and the ability to increase the supply of qualified professionals serving this geographic region.
 3. Evaluating and improving curriculum and other program elements to assure that standards of the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP) in the area of Clinical Mental Health Counseling continue to be met.
 - Student Learning Outcomes were collected and assessed, and a report was submitted to the Department Chair and the SHP Interim Dean. The outcomes were based on key performance indicators related to CACREP accreditation

standards. No areas were below the expected outcome standard for that area, and no remediation was recommended.

- Clinical (site) supervisors in the clinical supervisor survey indicated that most of students in their practicum/internship had strong knowledge, skills, and dispositions in key CACREP standard areas. Employers of the graduates and graduates themselves also provided similar responses in the employer survey and the alumni survey.
- Course content and texts for the courses listed below were reviewed and updated:
PSRT5103: Human Growth and Development
PSRT5310: Psychopathology
PSRT5320: Social and Cultural Diversity Issues
PSRT5242: Group Methods
- The Annual Vital Statistics Report on program statistics was submitted to CACREP in the fall as part of maintaining program accreditation.
- The degree is currently accredited by CACREP with a specialization in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. The self-study process to continue accreditation was initiated.

4. Increasing awareness of the M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Track in the counseling community as well as in the larger New Jersey community and surrounding regions to recruit and enroll adequate numbers of students.

- The program continued extensive recruitment activities during 2023-2024. This included two virtual open houses and one on-campus open house in Piscataway. There was also recruitment at a virtual conference. The program's Student Handbook, which gives detailed information about the program, is sent to all prospective students requesting information and is also sent to all current students each year. The Student Handbook is updated annually. As a result of these efforts, we received a large number of applications to consider for the Fall 2024 entering class and continue to be able to enroll an adequate number of students.
- Program admission dates such as notifications of admission decisions have been made consistent with dates for other similar programs.
- The program's advisory committee has diverse representation including student representation, individuals with disabilities, employers, and a variety of community agencies. The committee generally meets twice per year.

5. Developing certificate programs and/or courses to meet the needs of counseling professionals who wish to upgrade their qualifications and credentials in various areas of specialization.

- The Department offers the Post Bachelor's Certificate in Counseling, which provides an introduction to the field of counseling, and the Post Master's Certificate in Counseling. The Post Master's Certificate is taken mainly by students wishing to complete course work for licensure or other credentials. All courses needed for certificates are available online. Most are also available on-campus.

- The program offers continuing education in clinical supervision each fall for all new clinical supervisors. Clinical supervisors are also invited to attend other Department trainings including trainings offered by the Department's Mental and Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC), a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) funded project and by the Department's Integrated Employment Institute (IEI), which is funded by the New Jersey Division of Mental Health and Addictions Services. There is no cost for these trainings.
6. Providing a career ladder for individuals who have obtained a bachelor's degree related to human services and are interested in completing professional preparation as a counselor.
 - Department certificates expand career ladder opportunities for individuals interested in increasing their knowledge and skills related to counseling. The Post Bachelor's certificate also offers an opportunity to "try out" the program. We received several applications for the Fall 2024 class from students who had taken the Post Bachelor's certificate. These courses can be applied to the full degree, upon acceptance of the student to the program.
 - The program continues to work cooperative with the Department's undergraduate programs to make students aware of graduate study in counseling and the variety of career opportunities available with the master's degree. This includes presentations about the program in undergraduate classes and at SHP educational and recruitment events.
 7. Seeking funding including grants to assist students with tuition.
 - Under the terms of the HRSA RUBY grant in which we are participating, students in our program who are part of the interdisciplinary teams for this grant receive stipends during the internship.
 - The program currently has two Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Long Term Training grants. These grants are used primarily for tuition support. All students receiving RSA tuition support sign payback agreements to work in the field of rehabilitation counseling for two years after graduation for each year of tuition support received. Required reports were completed.
 8. Expanding affiliations to provide students with a variety of counseling practice opportunities in the community.
 - We continued participation in the HRSA RUBY grant for integrated care for transition age youth. New clinical affiliations were established relevant to clinical placements for this grant. Participation in the HRSA grant gives students practice opportunities to be part of interdisciplinary teams providing integrated behavioral health care services. This project is in cooperation with the Rutgers School of Social Work and the Rutgers School of Nursing.

- The number of clinical affiliations increased during the past year with the program having over 100 clinical affiliates. There were 16 new clinical affiliates in this academic year. This includes community mental health programs, other community agencies providing services to individuals with disabilities, and government agencies.
- The program has available a pool of qualified agency clinical supervisors including clinical supervisors who are program graduates. All new clinical supervisors complete a clinical supervisor orientation training before beginning clinical supervision with students.

9. Developing faculty practice with an emphasis on community service.

- Efforts continued to develop faculty practice and to develop community service projects. Faculty have been active in professional associations including the New Jersey Counseling Association.
- Faculty participated in several community service projects this past year including serving on Boards of community agencies.
- Faculty have volunteered at a community agency to provide counseling services.
- Dr. Oursler was reappointed by the Governor to serve on the State Rehabilitation Council.

Program Evaluation Summary:

Student Learning Outcomes: This report examines aggregate student performance on key performance indicators related to CACREP accreditation standards and to School of Health Professions (SHP) learning outcomes. The most recent Student Learning Outcomes Report indicated all key performance indicators were met or exceeded.

Clinical Supervisor Survey: Clinical supervisors are sent a survey following the end of the internship. This survey is completed anonymously online. Clinical supervisors who responded to the most recent survey indicated satisfaction with the preparation of our students and with other areas such as the overall organization of these clinical experiences and communication with practicum and internship faculty.

Ongoing Student Assessment and Feedback: During the course of study, student academic progress and the interpersonal characteristics related to professional growth and interactions important for professional growth, interactions with clients and colleagues, and success as a professional counselor are regularly evaluated. Students with issues in these areas, either academically or with regard to professional dispositions, are advised to meet with their advisor to develop a plan to address these. No particular issues were noted in the aggregate.

Student Exit Survey: Internship students complete this survey at the end of the internship course. It assesses overall learning in the program. This survey is completed anonymously online. In summary, 94% of responding students who graduated in this academic year answered "Yes." to the question of "The program adequately prepared me for an entry level position in counseling,"

Graduate Student Survey: This bi-annual survey looks at student experiences and satisfaction with their experience overall in the program and at Rutgers. Current students complete this survey anonymously online. This survey was conducted in Spring, 2023. Overall, students expressed satisfaction with Rutgers services and the program.

Alumni Survey: Program graduates who graduated three years ago are contacted by email and requested to complete this survey. This survey is completed anonymously online. Survey results indicated all alumni who responded were working in the field. All responders in the most recent survey would recommend the program to a prospective student.

Employer Survey: As part of the alumni survey, program graduates are requested to forward the employer survey to their supervisor. Although based on a limited response rate, employers who responded indicated graduates were well prepared. All who responded said they would hire another program graduate if they had the opportunity, and all said that they would recommend the program to a prospective student.

Review of Results and Curriculum Changes: Results of all program evaluations are reviewed by program faculty as part of the Graduate Curriculum Committee and by the program's Advisory Committee. Curriculum initiatives in the past year included the following:

- We arranged to relocate the program in Southern New Jersey to the Rutgers Camden campus from our previous location where the lease had expired. Classes in Camden started in Fall, 2023.
- The content of PSRT5310, Psychopathology, was updated to the *DSM-5-TR*. This included adoption of a new edition of the course text.
- A new text was adopted for PSRT5102, Counseling Techniques I, as part of making skills taught in this course more consistent with skill requirements in PSRT6011, Practicum in Counseling.
- We continued evaluation of the effects of teaching a self-care unit for students based on a curriculum developed as part of the Northeast and Caribbean Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC). This unit was in PSRT6011, Practicum in Counseling.
- The curriculum for PSRT5242, Group Methods was reviewed and revised including adoption of a new text.
- The syllabus for PSRT5103, Human Growth and Development was reviewed and updated.
- Content for PSRT5320, Social and Cultural Diversity Issues was also updated, and a new edition of the text was adopted.
- Faculty continue to research text options at lower costs. This includes adopting texts that are available at no charge from the Rutgers Library.
- Per recommendations from those responding to the alumni and employer surveys, the survey will be conducted two years post-graduation in the future, rather than the current three years. This change will be made to encourage a higher rate of return.

Report submitted by:
Janice Oursler, Ph.D., NCC, CRC
Program Director
M.S. in Rehabilitation Counseling, Clinical Mental Health Counseling Track