

**For Consideration of the Faculty of the  
Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education**

**November 2, 2015**

The Rehabilitation Psychology Program Area is seeking the approval of the following motion by the faculty of the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education at the November 2, 2015 faculty meeting:

To change the title of the Ph.D. major in “Rehabilitation Psychology” to “Rehabilitation Counselor Education” and to empower the chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education to pursue the title change through the necessary School of Education and University channels, in addition to pursuing accreditation of the Ph.D. major through the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP).

**Background**

Efforts to establish the M.S. major in rehabilitation counseling (currently titled Rehabilitation Psychology) and the Ph.D. major in rehabilitation counselor education (also currently titled Rehabilitation Psychology) were initiated in 1961. At that time, Kenneth Wilcox came to the Department of Education in the School of Education at UW-Madison, funded by a federal planning grant, to develop a graduate academic program in rehabilitation counseling, and George Wright joined the faculty soon after in 1962. From the very beginning, the M.S. major was designed to prepare rehabilitation counselors to provide counseling and other rehabilitation services to people with all types of disabilities in public and private rehabilitation agencies and programs, and the Ph.D. major was designed to prepare rehabilitation counselor educators to assume faculty positions in university programs preparing rehabilitation counselors. The first graduates of the Ph.D. program were produced in 1965, with the first master’s degree graduates a year or two before, and the initial focus of the M.S. and Ph.D. majors has continued to the present time, with the Ph.D. major producing rehabilitation counselor educators and M.S. major producing practicing rehabilitation counselors.

The titles of the M.S. major in rehabilitation counseling and the Ph.D. major in rehabilitation counselor education have gone through a number of iterations over the years.

Prior to 1964, the graduate majors at both degree levels were officially titled Education, as was also true of the teacher education, counseling and guidance, and special education majors which were also part of the Department of Education.

Beginning in 1964, after the teacher education program left the Department of Education to become the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, the rehabilitation counseling/rehabilitation counselor education majors were titled Counseling and Behavioral Studies, as were the majors in special education and counseling and guidance,

which were also part of the newly established Department of Counseling and Behavioral Studies.

Beginning in 1968, after the counseling and guidance program left the department, to become the Department of Counseling and Guidance (later changed to Counseling Psychology), the graduate majors in both special education and rehabilitation counseling/rehabilitation counselor education were titled as Studies in Behavioral Disabilities, which was also the name of the newly established department.

Finally, beginning in 1986, the titles of the graduate majors were changed to the current Rehabilitation Psychology in the renamed Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education, with Special Education having separately titled majors.

Three primary factors played a role in the 1986 selection of rehabilitation psychology as the title of the major. First, “rehabilitation psychology” seemed more descriptive of the content of the major at all three degree levels than “studies in behavioral disabilities,” as it denoted the study of behavior (the definition of psychology) as applied to people with *all types* of disabilities and the services provided to them in rehabilitation settings by rehabilitation counselors and related professionals. Second, at that time there was no licensure of rehabilitation counseling professionals at either the master’s or Ph.D. degree levels in Wisconsin and many other states, so a number of students were interested in the possibility of licensure as psychologists, which could be facilitated by the rehabilitation psychology title for the major (licensure is no longer an issue, as both Ph.D. and master’s level rehabilitation counselors can now be licensed as professional counselors in Wisconsin and elsewhere). Finally, there was a move at the time to establish a joint doctoral program with counseling psychology and to seek accreditation through the American Psychological Association (APA). However, that effort died because of the unwillingness of faculty in rehabilitation psychology to make the necessary changes in curriculum that would be required by APA, as those changes would have detracted from the rehabilitation counselor education focus of the curriculum, so counseling psychology then pursued APA accreditation on their own, which was achieved.

Throughout all of these changes in titles, the M.S. major has continued to prepare rehabilitation counselors to work with people with all types of disabilities in public and private rehabilitation agencies and programs; further the Ph.D. major has continued to prepare rehabilitation counselor educators for university programs in rehabilitation counseling and closely related majors. In fact, the overwhelming majority of our Ph.D. graduates, dating back to the first graduates in 1965 and continuing to date, have pursued academic careers as rehabilitation counselor educators, and our Ph.D. program has been the leading producer of faculty in rehabilitation counseling programs in universities nationwide. Further, the master’s degree program in rehabilitation psychology is accredited specifically as a rehabilitation counseling program, along with about 100 other such master’s degree programs, by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE). In addition, since the time that *U.S. News & World Report* first ranked graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling, the rehabilitation psychology program at UW-Madison has been consistently ranked either first or second and is currently tied for the top ranking.

## **Rationale for the Title Change for the Ph.D. Major**

The Ph.D. major, currently titled Rehabilitation Psychology, has always had a primary focus on the preparation of rehabilitation counselor educators, who will move into academic positions in universities to provide professional education and training to rehabilitation counselors at the master's degree level, in addition to rehabilitation counselor educators at the doctoral level and undergraduate students in rehabilitation-related majors, such as our undergraduate program in Rehabilitation Psychology.

In addition, the master's degree major, also currently titled Rehabilitation Psychology, has always had a primary focus on preparing rehabilitation counselors at the master's degree level, and a proposal will be forthcoming to change the title of the M.S. major to Rehabilitation Counseling; revisions are also underway for the M.S. curriculum, necessitated by new curriculum requirements established by the Wisconsin board that licenses our master's degree graduates and some Ph.D. graduates as Licensed Professional Counselors (LPCs), and these revisions are also intended to meet the new CACREP standards in Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling.

The degree titles of Rehabilitation Counselor Education for the Ph.D. major and Rehabilitation Counseling for the M.S. major are much more descriptive of the focus and content of the Ph.D. and master's degree programs, respectively, and are consistent with titles used for this same major at the doctoral and master's degree levels at other universities, including Michigan State University, University of Iowa, and Penn State University, the other three graduate programs ranked in the top four by *U.S. News & World Report*, along with our program at UW-Madison.

The timing of the changes in title for the Ph.D. major is critical in order to accommodate changes in program accreditation that are in progress, which will dramatically affect our program and Ph.D. graduates. Our current accrediting body, CORE, is merging with CACREP, effective July 1, 2017, which will result in changes in the accreditation standards for master's degree programs in rehabilitation counseling, along with providing, for the first time, accreditation for doctoral programs in rehabilitation counselor education. Although most current doctoral programs in rehabilitation counselor education have the major titled as Rehabilitation Counselor Education, there is a very small number of exceptions, and our Ph.D. program at UW-Madison is the only one with the major title of Rehabilitation Psychology. According to the new standards, the variability in titles of doctoral degree majors will no longer be allowed. Specifically as related to our Ph.D. program, any doctoral graduates after January 1, 2018 with our current major title of Rehabilitation Psychology will no longer be eligible to hold core faculty positions in accredited university graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling, the primary positions that our graduates have held over the years.

If and when the change in title of the major is approved, we request that the change be phased in over time. For all students who are admitted after the change is official, their major upon completion of the Ph.D. degree would be the new title of Rehabilitation Counselor Education. For students admitted before the change in title is official, they would be allowed to choose whether their major is designated as Rehabilitation Psychology or Rehabilitation Counselor Education.

In summary, the change in title of our current Ph.D. Rehabilitation Psychology major to Rehabilitation Counselor Education will be much more consistent with the mission and content of our Ph.D. program. In addition, this change is important to accomplish at the present time so as to allow our program to remain viable as the leading producer of faculty for university programs in rehabilitation counseling and to allow our Ph.D. graduates access to the career opportunities that they are working toward pursuing.