

## **Proposal to Change the Title of the M.S. Degree Major in Rehabilitation Psychology to Rehabilitation Counseling**

The Rehabilitation Psychology Program Area faculty, propose the following motion to the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education:

To change the title of the M.S. degree major in Rehabilitation Psychology to Rehabilitation Counseling and to empower the chair of the Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education to pursue the title change for the major through the necessary School of Education and University channels.

This proposal follows an earlier one to change the title of the Ph.D. major in Rehabilitation Psychology to Rehabilitation Counselor Education, which is moving through university channels.

### **Background**

The background for this proposal is virtually identical to the earlier proposal to change the title of the Ph.D. major to Rehabilitation Counselor Education, but that background is repeated here so that this proposal can stand alone.

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 and closely related professionals. 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, along with special education and counseling and guidance, were titled Counseling and Behavioral Studies, which was also the new name of the department.

Beginning in 1968, after the counseling and guidance program left 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, not just behavioral disabilities, and to 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 Ph.D. 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 independently, which was achieved.

Throughout these changes in titles, beginning in the early 1960s and continuing to the present time, the M.S. major has prepared rehabilitation counselors to work with people with all types of disabilities in public and private rehabilitation agencies and programs, while the Ph.D. major has continued to prepare rehabilitation counselor educators for faculty positions in university programs in rehabilitation counseling and closely related majors.

### **Rationale for the Title Change for the M.S. Degree Major**

The proposed M.S. degree title of Rehabilitation Counseling is clearly descriptive of the focus and content of the major. As noted above, throughout the more than 50-year history of the M.S. major, the focus has been on the preparation of practicing professionals in rehabilitation counseling. M.S. degree graduates of our program meet the educational requirement for the

national Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential, as well as the State of Wisconsin Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential. Master's degree programs in rehabilitation counseling are currently accredited in about 100 universities in the U.S., including our M.S. degree program at UW-Madison, by the Council on Rehabilitation Education (CORE), which was established in 1975 and is recognized by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation to accredit graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling. The major in nearly all CORE-accredited graduate programs is specifically titled as Rehabilitation Counseling. Also, our graduate program at UW-Madison has always been ranked either first or second among all graduate programs in rehabilitation counseling by *U.S. News & World Report*, and is currently tied for the top ranking.

In addition, to clearly describing the focus of the major, there are two current changes in the profession that necessitate a change in the title of the major to Rehabilitation Counseling to be initiated at this time. First, our accrediting body, CORE, is merging with the Council on Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), effective July 1, 2017, and the current title of our major will no longer be acceptable when our accreditation will be up for renewal in 2018-19. Second, the State of Wisconsin Board, which licenses rehabilitation counselors through the Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) credential, is implementing new curriculum standards for the educational requirement for the license, effective September 1, 2018, and the current title of the major will no longer be acceptable.

In summary, the proposed title of Rehabilitation Counseling is clearly descriptive of the content and focus of the major at the M.S. degree level, and changes in program accreditation and certification and licensure of graduates to practice the profession necessitate this proposed change in title

All of our current M.S. degree students are aware of our pursuit of the new title for the major, and they understand and accept the rationale for pursuing this change. In addition, we have publicized the likely change to potential applicants to the program, so that they will know of the likely change before deciding to enter the major.

Finally, less than 50% of the current curriculum content currently required for the M.S. degree will change with the initiation of the new title.

### **Proposed Implementation**

It is critical to change the title of the M.S. degree major as soon as possible in order to accommodate the changes in standards for graduate program accreditation and for the certification and licensing of graduates to practice the profession. Thus, we request that the change to the Rehabilitation Counseling title be initiated as soon as possible. In addition, we request that the title of Rehabilitation Psychology also be retained until September 2018, with current students able to opt for the new title until the August 2018 graduation date. Any continuing M.S. degree students who would wish to graduate with the rehabilitation psychology major after August 2018 would be switched to a committee degree.