

Rehabilitation Counseling Program – Year in Review for Academic Year 2025-2026

Faculty and Staff, Brief Bios:

Dr. Michael Gerald, Ph.D., CRC., LMHC-Iowa, CMHC-Utah (Associate Professor) in rehabilitation counseling and began his appointment in the Fall 2020 semester and has been a key player in helping finalize efforts related to counselor licensure. He is the director of the Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Clinic (CRCC Service Line) in the Sorenson Legacy Foundation Center for Clinical Excellence (SCCE) and currently serves as the president of the Utah Mental Health Counselors Association. Dr. Gerald was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor in April 2026.

Jennifer Hunsaker, MRC, CRC, A-CMHC-Utah (Professional Practice Assistant Professor) teaches a variety of courses in the MRC program. After completing her Master's in HR in 2000, she spent the better part of 20 years in organizational development consulting in the small business healthcare space before deciding to pivot into clinical rehabilitation counseling. In addition to teaching, Professor Hunsaker serves clients in the SCCE CRC Service Line. Professor Hunsaker serves on multiple committees with the Utah Mental Health Counselor's Association.

Dr. Trenton Landon, Ph.D., CRC., A-CMHC-Utah (Associate Professor) has been with Utah State since the Fall 2016 semester. Dr. Landon presently serves as the program chair for the Master's in Rehabilitation Counseling. Dr. Landon has authored/coauthored over **40 peer reviewed publications** and **7 book chapters**. He presently serves on the Board of Directors the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA), and chairs the CRCC Ethics Committee. Dr. Landon serves clients in the SCCE CRC Service Line. Dr. Landon is submitting his promotion packet for Full Professor in the coming 2026-2027 academic year.

Dr. Michelle McKnight, Ph.D., CRC, LPC-Idaho (Associate Professor) and has been with Utah State since the Fall 2018 semester. Since that time, Dr. McKnight-Lizotte has authored/co-authored **over 20 peer reviewed publications** and **multiple book chapters**.

Dr. Kathleen (Kat) Oertle, Ph.D., CRC (Associate Professor) began her employment at USU in Fall. Since arriving, Dr. Oertle has secured external funding of nearly \$6 million of which is a **\$600,000 3-year grant for her latest project, called "Collaborate for Change (C2)"** (one of five funded out of 134 total projects). Dr. Oertle has authored/co-authored **24 peer-reviewed publications and 3 book chapters** and given **numerous presentations** at the national, state, and local levels. Dr. Landon is submitting his promotion packet for Full Professor in the coming 2026-2027 academic year.

Dr. Brian Phillips, Ph.D., CRC (Full Professor) joined the Rehabilitation Counseling faculty at USU in Fall of 2019. His research focuses on two primary strands, namely (a) understanding and predicting workplace social effectiveness and its outcomes and (b) measuring the influence of individual strengths on adjustment, well-being, and employment outcomes of people with disabilities. He has worked on multiple federally funded research projects and serves as an editorial board member for several journals. Dr. Phillips has **over 60 publications** and was promoted to Full Professor in April 2026.

Kris Wengreen, Graduate Program Coordinator, is a full-time departmental employee. Her degree in Business Information Systems has served the USU RCM program well because she is able to develop databases which record and monitor many aspects of the program including RSA Scholar Payback, Student Progress, Graduates, and much more. Mrs. Wengreen has been with USU for more than 18 years.

Tracy Woolstenhulme, MRC., CRC, (Professional Practice Assistant Professor) serves as the practicum/internship coordinator in the Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling Department at Utah State University. Her work with practicum/internship students is invaluable to the core faculty as her work with practicum internship students allows core faculty to focus on research and grant writing.

General Program Information

July 1, 2025 – June 30, 2026

Number of Students

Current Doctoral Students: 7

Newly Admitted Doctoral Students: 2 – Fall 2025 start date.

Current Master's Degree Students: 63

Newly Admitted MRC Students, Fall 2026: 22 (24 admitted, 1 declined the offer of admissions; 1 deferred to Spring 27)

Current Alternative Certification Students:

- Certificate in Rehabilitation and Disability Studies: 7 (0 admitted for Fall 2026)
- CRCC Category 3, non-degree seeking: 20 (13 admitted for Fall 2026)
- Clinical Rehabilitation Counseling Certificate: 8

Projected Spring 2026 MRC Graduates: 19

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Long Term Training Grants: We presently have three RSA Long Term Training Grants with Dr. Michael Gerald (H129B190010), Dr. Kathleen Oertle (H129W250010), and Dr. Trenton Landon (H129B190009) serving as PIs. This helps offset the tuition costs for many of our students. Funds are also used to support state level professional association conferences and continuing education opportunities for our students, graduates, and professionals here in Utah across the nation.

Students Supported with Scholarship Funds

Semester	Number of Students	Scholarship Money Dispersed
Fall 25	12	\$39,972
Spring 26	25	\$90,034
Summer 26	18	\$59,261
Fall 26	46	\$171,721
Total Scholarship Money Dispersed: \$360,988		

Faculty Scholarly Works from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026

The following are the scholarly products and grant applications/managed grants produced from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. Products are listed in alphabetical order.

Published/In press	# of Publications with Student Co-Authors or by Student Authors	Book Chapters	Manuscripts Under Review

Published/In Press

An asterisk (*) denotes authorship with a graduate student.

Journal Articles:

1. Brinck, E. A., Soldner, J. L., Kuo, H. J., Sabella, S. A., Landon, T. J., Bernacchio, C. P., & Boland, E. A. (2026). An AI perspective on counseling supervision. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(6), 1038. Special Issue on Artificial Intelligence in Mental Health and Counseling Practices.
2. D'Agostino, S. R., Bhana-Lopez, N., Landon, T. J., Roylance, A.*, & Briggs, A.* (2026). Building on common ground: Autistic adults' and parents of young autistic children's perspectives on early behavioral intervention practices. *Behavioral Sciences*, 16(4), 591. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs16040591>
3. *Dang, H., McCall, C., & Oertle, K. M. (2026). Compliance isn't enough: Examining university accommodation processes in light of ADA Title II/Section 504 toward intentional student support. *Journal of Engineering Education*.
4. Fleming, A. R., & Phillips, B. N. (2025). Access to care among disabled adults in the United States with public and private insurance. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 91(1), 68-77.
5. Landon, T. J., Hunsaker, J., Gerald, M. E., & Poe, M. J.* (2025). Serving refugees and other displaced persons with disabilities. *Journal of Humanistic Counseling*, 64, S82-89. <https://doi.org/10.1002/johc.70019>
6. Landon, T. J., Friedman, K., McDougal, J., Poe, M.*, Rocha, M. A., Zanskas, S., & Phillips, B. N. (2026). Professional counseling orientation and ethical decision making: A disability-based approach to counselor education. *Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal*. <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.143174>
7. McCarthy, A., Baumunk, M. J., Matkin, K., Bernacchio, C., Landon, T. J., Soldner, J., & Taylor, A. (2025). A content analysis of rehabilitation counseling supervision literature. *Rehabilitation Counselor Educator's Journal*, 14(1). <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.134083>
8. Oertle, K. M. (2026). Investigating participation to strengthen transition-specific collaboration among rehabilitation professionals for improved outcomes. *Journal of Applied Rehabilitation Counseling*, 57(1). Online first <https://doi.org/10.1891/JARC-2024-0035>
9. Oertle, K. M. (2025). Evaluating a community rehabilitation program using a participatory framework for improvement of supported employment services. *Rehabilitation Professional*, 31(open access). <https://doi.org/10.70385/001c.147035>
10. Phillips, B. N., Fleming, A. R., Kwiatek, S. M., Riesen, T., Emery, C. K., Langone, A., Gripenrog, L., Garside, M., Cardis, J., Snyder, A., Taylor, D. L., Allen, M., Harward, E. (2025). Overcoming barriers to collaboration through data-informed transition planning and services. Advanced online publication. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 63(2), 160-170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10522263251356271>
11. Stay, L. V.*, Landon, T. J., D'Agostino, S. R., Pinkelman, S. E., McKnight, M., & Southwick, J. (Accepted). Autistic adults' perspectives and experiences of ABA. *Developmental Disabilities Network Journal*.

Book Chapters

Manuscripts Under Review:

1. Bezyak, J., Phillips, B. N., Lister, A., & Shuman, E. (Under Review). Accessibility in Action: Barriers to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act [Manuscript submitted for publication]. Rehabilitation Counseling and Sciences, University of Northern Colorado.
2. Fleming, A. R., Phillips, B. N., Riesen, T. (Under Review). Measuring what matters: States use of the Transition Readiness Toolkit to advance Pre-Employment Transition Services. Rehabilitation and Human Services, The Pennsylvania State University.
3. Landon, T. J., Sabella, S. A., Schultz, J. C., McCarthy, A., Soldner, J. L., Dubinski, S.*, Poe, M.*, & Shlemon, P. (Under review). Clinical supervision in rehabilitation counseling: Re-examining the feasibility of the CRC-CS credential.
4. Phillips, B. N., Fleming, A. R. (Under Review). Implementation study of the Transition Readiness Toolkit across State VR Agencies. Special Education and Rehabilitation Counseling, Utah State University.
5. Poe, M.*, Landon, T. J., Lockett, M.*, & Hamblin, A.* (Under review). Turnover in state VR agencies: Reasons rehabilitation counselors stay.
6. Sabella, S. A., & Landon, T. J. (under review). Clinical supervision knowledge and skills in rehabilitation counseling: Revisiting Thielsen and Leahy (2001).
7. Tichy, N., Park, S., & Landon, T. J. (Under review). Artificial intelligence in rehabilitation counseling: A national baseline survey of certified rehabilitation counselors

Presentations

Refereed Presentations	Invited Presentations	Poster Presentations	Virtual Summit
23	7	3*	1

An asterisk (*) denotes a presentation with or by a graduate student.

Refereed Presentations

1. Bobroff, S., Clark, M. L., Clark, J. Oertle, K. M., McCall, C., Yerelien, S., & Allen, K. (2026). *Innovating practices using person-driven planning to dispel myths with evidence and outcomes*. Association of Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education (ARRPE) Annual conference. Concurrent presentation. San Antonio, TX.
2. Christensen, A., Clarke, B., Cleveland, C., *Tuttle, M., & Oertle, K. M. (2026). *Creating change through transition-specific collaboration using person-driven planning to promote dignity, advocacy, determination, and justice for living, learning, participating, and working*. Online. HTC2 Summit IV
3. Christensen, A., Clarke, B., Cleveland, C., *Tuttle, M., & Oertle, K. M. (2026). *Creating change through transition-specific collaboration using person-driven planning to promote dignity, advocacy, determination, and justice*. CEC Special Education Convention & Expo, Salt Lake City, UT
4. Dang, H., McCall, C., & Oertle, K. M. (2026). *Compliance isn't enough: Examining university accommodation processes in light of ADA Title II/Section 504 toward intentional student support*. Online. HTC2 Summit IV.
5. Fleming, A., & Phillips, B. N. (2025, October 8-11). Transition Readiness Toolkit: Early Evaluations of a Cultural Shift in Pre-ETS Assessment. [Conference presentation]. Division on Career Development and Transition Conference 2025, Denver, CO, United States.

6. Gerald, M., Hunsaker, J.J. (2025, September). *Avoiding Values Conflicts in Adjustment Counseling for Chronic Illness and Disability*. Utah Mental Health Counselors Fall Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah.
7. Gerald, M., & Hunsaker, J.J. (2026, February). *Adjustment to Disability Counseling*. Telehealth Certification Institute, Virtual.
8. Gerald, M., Hunsaker, J. J., Nelson, T.*, Newlon, J.* (2026, June). *Adjustment to Disability Counseling*. American Mental Health Counselors Association Annual Conference, Portland, Oregon.
9. Gerald, M., Hunsaker, J.J., Newlon, J.* (2026, April). *Fostering Counselor Confidence, Competence & Comfort*. American Rehabilitation Counselors Association Annual Conference, Columbus, Ohio.
10. Hanes, Stephanie, & Phillips, B. N. (2026, March 9). Pre-ETS Quality Measurement and Data-Informed Transition Planning with the Transition Readiness Toolkit. North Carolina Chapter of the Division on Career Development and Transition Conference 2026, Greensboro, NC, United States.
11. Hunsaker, J.J. (2025, September). *Adjustment to Disability Counseling for Persons with Chronic Illness and Disability*. Wyoming Vocational Rehabilitation Conference, Sheridan, Wyoming.
12. Hunsaker, J.J. (2026, May). *How to Make Friends and Influence People: Advocacy Edition*. Utah Mental Health Counselors Association Spring Conference, Logan, Utah.
13. Landon, T. J., Tichy, N., & Froehlich, R. (2026). *Ethical decision making in the AI era*. Utah Mental Health Counselors Association, Spring Conference. Logan, Utah.
14. Landon, T. J. (2025). *Assessment as an essential element of case conceptualization*. Utah Mental Health Counselor's Association – Fall Conference. Taylorsville, UT.
15. Landon, T. J. (2025). *Using assessment to enhance case conceptualization*. Wyoming Vocational Rehabilitation Services Annual In-Service. Sheridan, WY.
16. Landon, T. J. (2025). *Burnout and the ethics of self-care*. Wyoming Vocational Rehabilitation Services Annual In-Service. Sheridan, WY.
17. Phillips, B. N., & Fleming, A. (2025, October 8-11). *Beyond data sharing: A model for sustained data-informed collaboration in transition services*. [Conference presentation]. Division on Career Development and Transition Conference 2025, Denver, CO, United States.
18. Phillips, B. N., Fleming, A. R., & Sansom Briscoe, R. (2026, March 30-April 1). *Building Smarter systems: How quality data enables responsible ai*. Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation Spring Conference. Washington, DC, United States.
19. Phillips, B. N., Gilbert, S., Carver, C., & Pike, P. J. (2025, October 8-11). *Partnership for progress for Colorado*. [Conference presentation]. Division on Career Development and Transition Conference 2025, Denver, CO, United States.
20. Poe, M. J.*, & Landon, T. J. (2026). *Turnover in state vocational rehabilitation agencies –Insights and trends*. American Rehabilitation Counseling Association – Virtual Learning Institute.
21. Poppen, M., Phillips, B. N., & Fleming, A. (2025, October 8-11). *Meaningful Career Building for Students with Disabilities*. [Conference presentation]. Division on Career Development and Transition Conference 2025, Denver, CO, United States.

22. Tichy, N., Landon, T. J., & Froehlich, R. (2026). *Ethical integration of Artificial Intelligence in Rehabilitation Counseling*. American Rehabilitation Counseling Pre-Conference Seminar (American Counseling Association Conference). Columbus, Ohio.
23. Tichy, N., Landon, T. J., & Froehlich, R. (2025). *The commission for rehabilitation counseling certification (CRCC): ethical practices and artificial intelligence*. Association for Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education. San Antonio, TX.

Invited Presentations

1. Landon, T. J. (2025). *Perspectives on disability and inclusion in rural communities*. Utah Multicultural Disability Network. Utah State University – Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice. Logan, Utah.
2. Landon, T. J. (2025). *Listening and caring: Unspoken aspects of my job description*. Bridgerland Technical College. Annual Teacher In-Service Training. Logan, Utah.
3. Landon, T. J. (2025). *Burn out and the ethics of self-care*. Bridgerland Technical College, Department of Information Technology. Departmental Professional Development. Logan, Utah.
4. Landon, T. J. (2026). *Ethical decision making in serving persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities*. Cache Employment and Training Center. Logan, Utah
5. Landon, T. J. (2026). *The power of choice and supporting personal autonomy*. Employment and Inclusion Conference – Institute for Disability Research, Policy, and Practice. Salt Lake City, Utah.
6. Oertle, K. M., & McCall, C. (2026). *Interdisciplinary Collaboration with Kathleen Marie Oertle, PhD, CRC, LVRC-Utah and Cassandra McCall, Ph.D., Certified Rehabilitation Counselor Commission (CRCC)* [Inside Rehabilitation Counseling Podcast](#); Invited; Interview with Taylor Bauer.
7. McCall, C., Cohn-Geltner, H., & Oertle, K. M., (2025). *Creating your own ecosystem: Transition engineered collaborative (TEC) for people with disabilities pursuing STEM careers*. Association of Rehabilitation Research, Policy, and Education (ARRPE), Invited, 2-hour Workshop, Savannah, GA.

Poster Presentations

- Three doctoral students presented posters at the Fall Utah Mental Health Counselors Association Conference.

Virtual Summit – Dr. Kathleen (Kat) Oertle

June 18, 2026: Heumannizing Transition – A Collaborate for Change (HTC2). At **HTC2 Summit IV** – 25 attendees representing 18 U.S. states and Puerto Rico.

Grants

Grants Submitted	Total Funding Requested
2	~\$2.7 million

Grant Submissions

1. Under Review: McCall, C., Oertle, K. M., Strauser, D. G., Gillen, A., & Perry, L. (Sept. 30, 2026-Oct. 1, 2029) *Research-Identified Pivotal Points Leading to Employment*

(*RIPPLE*): *Exploring Collaborative Ecosystems that Strengthen Engineering Employment Outcomes for People with Disabilities*; Funded by Administration for Community Living; National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) Disability and Rehabilitation Research Projects (DRRP) Program: Community Living and Participation (Research) Opportunity number: HHS-2026-ACL-NIDILRR-DPCP-0221. \$1.5 million requested.

2. Under Review: Oertle, K. M. (PI), & McCall (Co-PI) (**2025-2030**). *Transition Engineered Collaborative (TEC) Leveraging Envoys' Activities Demonstrating Employment Results Synergistically (LEADERS)*, Funding requested from the Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Community Living, National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) DPKT; Primary CFDA 93.433 Outcome Domain: Employment. This is to implement Collaborate for Change (ACL-NIDILRR-FIP Grant Number: 90IFDV0011) to meet the Absolute Priority. Amount Requested: \$1,245,139.97; submitted on March 17, 2025.

Current Funded Grants and Contracts

As rehabilitation counseling faculty, 4 projects (representing over \$8 million in total funding) were managed from July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. This funding helps supports a combination of research and teaching projects.

1. Gerald, M. E. (PI), & Landon, T. J. (Co-PI). *Rehabilitation Training: Rehabilitation Long-Term Training Program: Individuals who are Mentally Ill CFDA Number 84.129H*. Funded by U.S. Department of Education, The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). Amount Funded: \$1 Million. Grant # H129B190010, October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2030.
2. Landon, T. J. (PI). *Rehabilitation Training: Rehabilitation Long-Term Training Program: Rehabilitation Counseling CFDA Number 84.129B*. Funded by U.S. Department of Education, The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). Amount Funded: \$1 Million. Grant # H129B190009, October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2030.
3. Oertle, K. (PI), and McCall, K. (Co-PI). *Rehabilitation Training: Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Grant*. Funded by U.S. Department of Education, The Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS). Amount Funded: \$1 Million. Grant # H129W250010, October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2030.
4. Riesen, T., Phillips, B. N. (Co-Investigator) and others. *Partnerships for Progress in Colorado* (H421E230017). Sponsored by Rehabilitation Services Administration and awarded to the state of Colorado Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (September 1, 2023 - September 30, 2028). Total Funded: \$14,116,234.89 - Subaward to USU: \$5,467,582.00.