

# C&R NEWS

Counseling & Rehabilitation Program Newsletter

(Red brick pathways leading to a metal and brick gate. Behind the gate lie trees and a red brick building)

## Counseling and Rehabilitation Program Represented at ARCA 2026 Symposium

Students and faculty from the University of South Carolina's Counseling and Rehabilitation Program recently participated in the 2026 American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) Pre-Conference Symposium held April 8 in Columbus, Ohio.



ARCA members pose for a photo.



Faculty and a presenter pose for a photo.

The symposium, hosted by Counseling and Rehabilitation Program Director and 2025-2026 ARCA President, Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene, brought together rehabilitation counselors, counselor educators, students, disability advocates, and allies from across the country for a day of learning, collaboration, and networking focused on advancing the field of rehabilitation counseling. The event also provided attendees with opportunities to earn CRC and NBCC continuing education credits. Representing the USC Counseling and Rehabilitation Program at the event were students **Tyla Jones** and **Rebecca Dawson**, along with faculty members **Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene**, **Dr. Michael Walsh**, and **Dr. David Dawson**.

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(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

## Counseling and Rehabilitation Program Represented at ARCA 2026 Symposium

In addition to the pre-conference symposium, attendees also had opportunities to participate in additional educational sessions and the ARCA Annual Membership Meeting held on April 9.

Participation in professional conferences such as ARCA provides valuable opportunities for students and faculty to remain engaged with emerging trends, advocacy efforts, and best practices within the counseling and rehabilitation profession. Conferences also create meaningful opportunities for networking, mentorship, and professional growth while strengthening connections within the rehabilitation counseling community.



Students and faculty pose for a selfie.



Dr. Dawson and Gerald Corey at ACA.

“My experience at the ARCA Pre-Conference Symposium in Columbus, Ohio, was both beautiful and memorable. I gained a multitude of skills while learning from the diverse works of others in our field. One highlight was discovering the practical steps for publishing research, which emphasized how much personal motivation is required for the creative process. Additionally, I also found the research shifting the perspective on substance use disorders toward a chronic illness model to be incredibly insightful. Likewise, the sessions on mitigating burnout and establishing professional boundaries resonated deeply as I prepare for my future career. Beyond the sessions, I truly enjoyed immersing myself in the city’s vibrant art scene and local restaurants. This experience broadened my understanding of the counseling field and fueled my motivation to remain culturally responsive. Furthermore, it highlighted critical gaps we can address as a community to better serve others through trauma-informed principles. Ultimately, attending this symposium has been a vital step in my professional development.” – **First year student, Rebecca Dawson**

The USC Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is proud to support student and faculty engagement in national professional organizations and conferences that contribute to leadership development, advocacy, and continued excellence in counselor education and rehabilitation practice.

For more information about the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association and future events or to become a member, visit the [American Rehabilitation Counseling Association website](https://www.arca.org/).



(Students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

# Save the Date

# And the Winners Are...

May 7th, 2026:  
School of Medicine  
Hooping

The University of South Carolina Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is proud to recognize several outstanding students and graduates who were selected for program awards during the 2025-2026 academic year. These awards honor excellence in academic achievement, clinical practice, leadership, advocacy, and service to the counseling and rehabilitation profession.

## Distinguished Rehabilitation Counseling Student Award

This year's recipient of the Distinguished Rehabilitation Counseling Student Award is Allie Ledbetter.



Allie Ledbetter

This award recognizes a graduate who has excelled academically, demonstrated outstanding performance in field experiences, and shown leadership through involvement in activities that support the rehabilitation counseling profession, the Counseling and Rehabilitation Program, and community agencies.

Allie was selected for her exceptional academic achievement, leadership, and service throughout her time in the program. Her contributions as a presenter during Learning Community Spring events, her strong work during practicum and internship experiences, and her leadership involvement in the Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA) and on the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) Board distinguished her as this year's recipient.

**Read on to see more award recipients!!**



CHECK OUT OUR  
SOCIALS!





(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

# And the Winners Are...

## Award for Clinical Excellence in Counseling and Rehabilitation

The recipients of the 2025–2026 Award for Clinical Excellence in Counseling and Rehabilitation are Julia Moro and Aileen Pagan-Welch.

This award recognizes students who demonstrate exceptional interest, growth, and skill development in clinical work during their field placement experiences.

Julia Moro was recognized for her practicum and internship work with the South Carolina Commission for the Blind and Prisma Behavioral Health. Through her work with teens, adults, and groups, Julia demonstrated strong counseling skills in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), particularly in facilitating skills-based groups. Faculty noted her continued growth in clinical confidence, rapport-building, and therapeutic effectiveness throughout her field experiences.



Julia Moro



Aileen Pagan-Welch

Aileen Pagan-Welch was honored for her practicum and internship experience at All Access Counseling, where she demonstrated a meaningful transition from vocational rehabilitation counseling into broader clinical rehabilitation practice. Her work supporting clients’ wellness and personal growth, along with her advocacy and leadership within the Deaf community, stood out during the selection process. Her professional presentations, recognitions, and elected leadership roles further reflect her commitment to the counseling profession and disability advocacy



(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

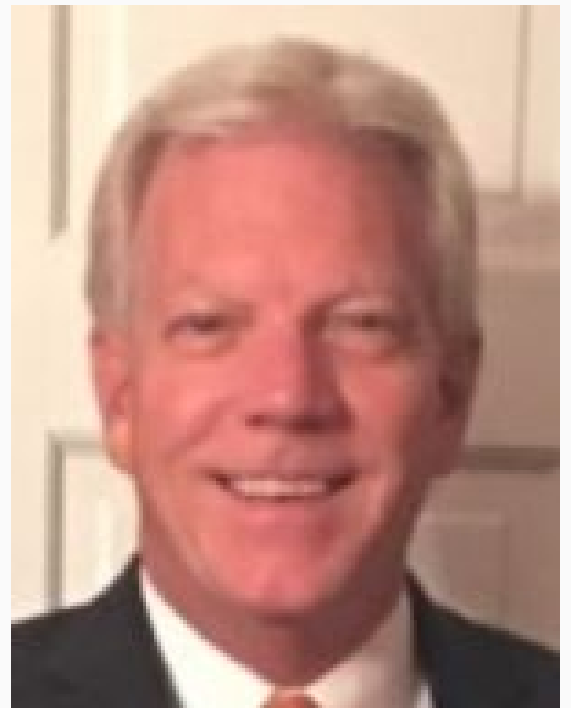
# And the Winners Are...

## Outstanding Contribution to the Counseling and Rehabilitation Program Award

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Program also proudly recognizes Dave Tussey as the recipient of the Outstanding Contribution to the Counseling and Rehabilitation Program Award.

This award is presented to an individual whose service and dedication have contributed significantly to the growth of the program while fostering a strong sense of community among students, faculty, and partners.

Dave was recognized for his ongoing willingness to represent and promote the program, support peers, and strengthen community engagement efforts. His dedication, leadership, and positive presence have made a meaningful impact on the Counseling and Rehabilitation Program community.



Dave Tussey

The awards will be formally presented during the **USC School of Medicine Hooding Ceremony on Thursday, May 7, at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center in Columbia, South Carolina.**

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Program extends its congratulations to Allie Ledbetter, Julia Moro, Aileen Pagan-Welch, and Dave Tussey for these well-deserved honors and thanks them for their contributions to the program and profession!





(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

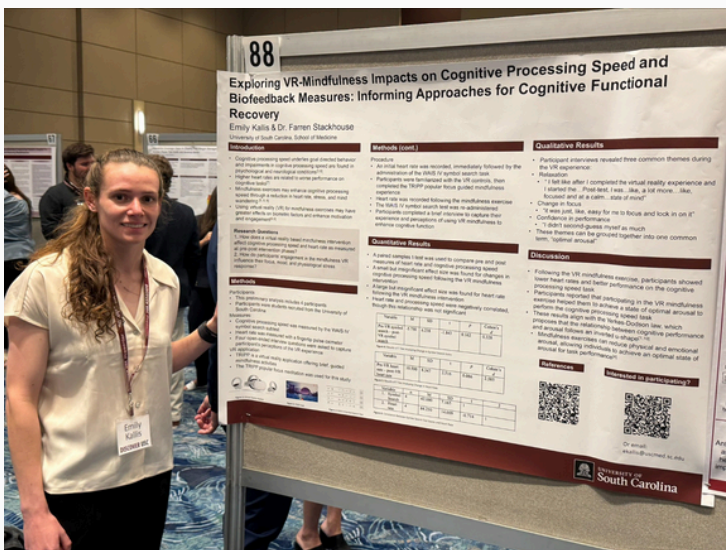
# Student Highlight: Discover USC

For the third year in a row, the Counseling and Rehabilitation Program was represented at the Discover USC conference by three of our students. Discover USC brings the university's research and scholarly community together by unifying celebrations of graduate student, postdoctoral and medical scholar innovation and scholarship into a single full-day extravaganza. The event brought stakeholders and partners from every part of USC and the C&R program's students took full advantage of the networking opportunities by showcasing their research.

C&R students, Ali Salisbury, Leah Limbaugh and Emily Kallis each presented to evaluators, visitors, staff and faculty throughout the day. Emily's presentation and associated academic poster entitled **"Exploring VR Mindfulness Impacts on Cognitive Processing Speed and Biofeedback Measures: Informing Approaches for Cognitive Functional Recovery"** detailed her research completed alongside faculty member, Dr. Farren Stackhouse while Ali and Leah presented **"Ethical Considerations for Rural Counseling: A Narrative Review"**, a continuation of their research completed as part of this year's 2026 ACA Ethics Competition.

Engaging in research has helped me to stay current with counseling literature and build up my skills in intervention planning and assessment. Discover USC was an opportunity to tie all my work together and get comfortable with discussing my research. I was able to get feedback from experts in a variety of fields, like education, psychology, and biostatistics, which has helped me plan out where to go next with my project. It's always cool to be able to see the research other students are working on in the SOM and across campus! - **Second year student, Emily Kallis**

This year's iteration of the conference hosted another great turnout throughout the day. We'd like to extend our congratulations to Leah Limbaugh, Emily Kallis and Ali Salisbury for their exceptional contributions and presentations.



Emily Kallis stands with her research poster.



Leah Limbaugh and Ali Salisbury stand with their research poster.



(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

# Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Daniel Balva’s Reflection on Grief in Counseling Practice

The University of South Carolina Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is proud to highlight a recent publication by adjunct instructor Daniel Balva, PhD, LMHC, NCC, whose thoughtful article, “The Quiet Grief of Counselors and the Complexity of Loss,” was recently featured in American Counseling Association’s Counseling Today. In this deeply reflective piece, Dr. Balva explores a topic that is often underdiscussed in counselor education and professional development: the grief counselors themselves experience following the loss of clients.



A graphic promoting the Counseling Today Blog.

Through personal reflection and clinical insight, he examines the emotional complexity of therapeutic relationships, the impact of unexpected client loss, and the importance of creating space within the profession for counselors to process their own grief.

The article also highlights the importance of supervision, peer consultation, and self-care practices for clinicians navigating these experiences, while reminding readers of the profound honor and responsibility involved in accompanying clients through difficult moments in life.

As a program, we are grateful for faculty members like Dr. Balva who continue contributing meaningful scholarship and advocacy to the counseling profession while helping prepare future counselors with authenticity, compassion, and humanity.

We encourage our students, alumni, site supervisors, and community partners to take time to read this important and timely article:

[Read “The Quiet Grief of Counselors and the Complexity of Loss”](#)





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# Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association Creates Alumni Mentorship Program

The University of South Carolina Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is excited to announce the development of a new voluntary alumni mentoring initiative designed to strengthen connections between current students and program graduates.

The initiative emerged through collaboration between program alumni and the Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA), whose members helped champion the idea as a way to build stronger professional connections, increase student support, and foster a greater sense of community within the program. Their advocacy and enthusiasm played an important role in helping move the concept toward implementation.

The Alumni Mentorship Program connects counseling and rehabilitation alumni with current students seeking professional guidance, support, and mentorship as they navigate graduate training and early career development. Areas of mentorship may include career exploration, clinical and professional development, licensure preparation, navigating field experiences, work-life balance, and transitioning into professional counseling roles.

Faculty and CRSA leadership hope the initiative will provide students with valuable opportunities to learn from professionals working across diverse counseling and rehabilitation settings while also helping alumni remain connected with the program and one another.

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Program extends its appreciation to the alumni who have expressed interest in participating and to the Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association for helping bring the idea to life in support of future counselors and rehabilitation professionals.

If you are interested in participating as a mentor, please complete this brief [Google Form](#)

## Blackboard: Did You Know?

Did you know that [BlackBoard's Rehabilitation Counseling Learning Community tab](#) contains an entire section devoted to the Portfolio Process?



Blackboard

The Portfolio process is for your personal and professional development. While there is no set format for Portfolio and the process is not graded, Portfolio is a required part of the program and leads directly to your practicum and internship experiences. Most students find it helpful to use a notebook format (electric or hard copy) to collect essays, notes, and other items generated through this process. By using the link above, you can navigate to the Portfolio Process Handbook which was designed to aid you as a step by step guide and source of information for all things portfolio related. By utilizing the Portfolio Process Handbook, you'll be able to stay on top of your goals and reflections each semester so that you can reflect periodically on your experiences, learning, and overall development.



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# ARCA's 2026 Virtual Learning Institute

The University of South Carolina Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is pleased to share an exciting professional development opportunity for students, alumni, supervisors, and counseling professionals through the upcoming ARCA Virtual Learning Institute 2026, hosted by the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association.

This year's institute, titled "*Counseling in Action: Practical Tools and Professional Growth*," features a dynamic series of virtual learning sessions throughout May focused on evidence-based counseling practice, disability-informed care, advocacy, ethics, and emerging approaches in rehabilitation and mental health counseling.

The institute brings together nationally recognized scholars, clinicians, counselor educators, and rehabilitation professionals from across the country to provide practical, actionable training relevant to counselors working in a variety of settings. Sessions are offered live throughout May, with recordings available through July 15 for additional flexibility and accessibility.

### Topics this year include:

- Motivational Interviewing in psychiatric rehabilitation
- Neuroaffirming counseling practices for autistic clients
- Disability identity in counseling practice
- Ethical decision-making in counselor education
- Disability advocacy and culturally responsive counseling
- Supporting families with neurodivergent needs
- Community-engaged participatory action research
- Workforce retention in vocational rehabilitation counseling
- Practical applications of the ICF model in rehabilitation counseling



Scan here to become a member!



**Michael J. Walsh, Ph.D.,  
LPC, CRC, CPRP**

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Program is also proud to see USC faculty represented among this year's presenters. Dr. Michael Walsh, Associate Clinical Professor and Director of the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Certificate of Graduate Study at USC School of Medicine Columbia, will present "*Motivational Interviewing in Practice: Supporting Recovery and Community Engagement in Psychiatric Disabilities*."



(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

# ARCA's 2026 Virtual Learning Institute

In addition, Dr. Jamar Booth, adjunct professor with USC's Counseling and Rehabilitation Program, will present "*From Barriers to Breakthroughs: Applying the ICF Model to Improve Quality of Life in Rehabilitation Counseling Practice.*"

Participants attending the institute will have opportunities to:

- Earn CRC/CVE and NBCC continuing education credits
- Explore current trends and evidence-based practices in rehabilitation counseling
- Learn practical clinical strategies applicable across diverse settings
- Engage with leaders in counseling, disability advocacy, and counselor education
- Access both live and recorded learning opportunities for increased flexibility

The institute is also intentionally affordable and accessible for students. Registration rates include:

- Student ARCA Members: \$5
- Student Non-Members: \$40
- Professional ARCA Members: \$30
- Professional Non-Members: \$115

Registration remains open through May 22, and participants may attend sessions live or access recordings afterward. Faculty strongly encourage students and alumni to consider participating in this valuable opportunity to deepen their professional knowledge, expand their network, and engage with current issues shaping the counseling and rehabilitation profession.

For more information and registration details, visit the [ARCA VL Institute website](#).





(students walking across a field of green grass with trees and a stone statue standing in the middle of the field)

# Wellness Corner

The 4-7-8 breathing technique is a simple yet powerful practice to reduce stress and promote relaxation. To do it: inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale slowly through your mouth for 8 seconds. Repeat this cycle up to four times. This method helps calm the nervous system, lower anxiety, and improve sleep by encouraging deep, mindful breathing.



A graphic depicting calm breathing.

# Writing Tip: Citing Multiple Authors

APA writing typically involves properly citing sources with multiple authors in-text according to APA 7th edition. For a work with two authors, always include both last names joined by an ampersand in parentheses or “and” in narrative citations: (Smith & Lee, 2021) or Smith and Lee (2021).

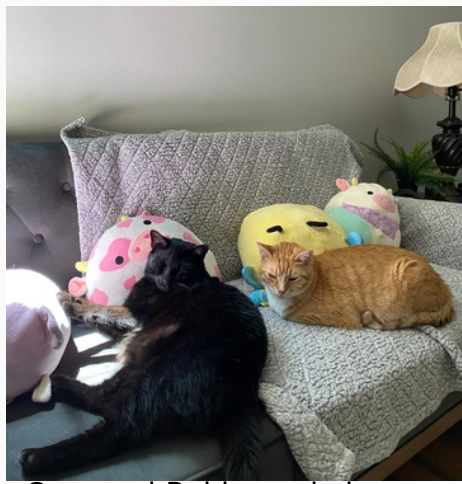
For a work with three or more authors, use only the first author’s last name followed by “et al.” and the publication year: (Jones et al., 2020).

This rule applies from the first citation onward, unlike APA 6th edition, which required listing all authors on the first mention. Ensuring accuracy here improves readability and aligns your work with current APA standards.

(Source: <https://owl.purdue.edu>)

# Pet of the Month

Meet our Pet(s) of the Month, Ozzy and Bubby – the beloved cats of **C&R student Skylar Linder!** Ozzy and Bubby are a bonded pair, and you can often find them cuddled up together. Look at these cuties!



Ozzy and Bubby curled up on the couch.

Show us your pet by filling out the form below:

## Pet of the Month

# Save the Date

School of Medicine Hooding - Columbia Metropolitan  
Convention Center (1101 Lincoln St, Columbia)  
Thursday, May 7th - 11:00am

School of Medicine Commencement - Koger  
Center (1051 Greene St, Columbia)  
Friday, May 8th - 12:00pm

ARCA's 2026 Virtual Learning Institute - [Register Here](#)  
by May 22<sup>nd</sup>

Summer Tuition Payment Deadline- The Summer  
2026 payment deadline is 5 pm on Wednesday May  
27. If your classes need to be saved, please email  
Takillya Brown at [Takillya.brown@uscmed.sc.edu](mailto:Takillya.brown@uscmed.sc.edu)  
before May 21, 2026