

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)

USC's Clinic for Counseling and Assessment

On January 20th, University of South Carolina launched a new clinic in Orangeburg to address critical gaps in rural healthcare. Designed as a student-facing initiative, the clinic provides hands-on learning opportunities while delivering essential services to underserved communities.

Focused on mental health care, career support, and substance use services, the clinic responds to pressing needs in rural South Carolina, where access to these resources is often limited. Students work under professional supervision to gain real-world clinical experience while supporting patient care, care coordination, and community outreach.

The clinic is already off to a strong start, supported by a growing network of community partners such as the Orangeburg County Commission on Aging, TCCADA, Clemson Rural Health: Clemson Health Clinic at Orangeburg and MUSC. These partnerships have helped connect individuals to care more efficiently, strengthen continuity of services, and increase awareness of available resources in the area.

As the program grows, the clinic is expanding into the Tri-County area, extending its reach and impact. By combining education with service, this initiative strengthens both the local healthcare system and the preparation of future professionals.

Read on to hear from two of the clinic's Graduate Assistants, **Skylar Linder** and **Amanda Allen**.

This issue:

- USC's Clinic for Counseling and Assessment
PAGE 01-02
- ARCA Master's Student of the Year
PAGE 03
- Lunch and Learn
PAGE 04
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Scholarship
PAGE 05
- ARCA Pre-Conference Symposium
PAGE 06
- Faculty Present at Lander University
PAGE 07
- Tri-County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Event
PAGE 08
- Blackboard: Did You Know?
PAGE 09
- Wellness Corner
PAGE 10



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

USC’s Clinic for Counseling and Assessment

“This semester I served as a Graduate Assistant with the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment (CCA) and it has been a meaningful part of my growth this year. I have been able to use each week to build skills that support rural counseling work and the development of the clinic. Some of my time has gone toward outreach efforts and learning how to introduce the clinic in ways that increase client comfort and buy-in, especially when talking with communities where there are more barriers to service. I have also used the CCA to focus on professional development through various trainings and certifications, including modules on telehealth in rural settings, trauma-informed care for underserved populations, motivational interviewing, suicide risk screening, culturally responsive counseling, and more.

In addition, I have reviewed referral information from clients screened through the CCA and used that to guide independent research on those populations, which has helped me better understand common needs and evidence-based approaches for those clients. I have also used this time to prepare for the NCE and comps, which allowed me to connect what I am studying to how services might actually be delivered in rural communities and better prepared me for the exams needed to start my career after graduation. Overall, working with the CCA has broadened my understanding of rural mental health work and has helped me think more intentionally about outreach and accessibility, as well as expanded the types of career paths I am considering postgrad.” - **Skylar Linder, Clinic GA**

“This semester I served as a Graduate Assistant with the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment (CCA), and it ended up being a really valuable part of my experience this year. I was able to see what goes into building a clinic from the ground up, including marketing, outreach, software selection, and staff training, by working closely with the people involved in those processes. That behind-the-scenes perspective was especially meaningful since I’ve been considering private practice in the future. I also had the opportunity to work within a different software system than the one I use in my internship, which helped me feel more prepared and adaptable going into future roles. Being exposed to multiple systems made the idea of starting somewhere new feel a lot less intimidating. Overall, I’m really grateful for the experience and for everyone involved in building CCA, especially Cassandra. She creates a supportive environment while also encouraging growth, which made a big impact on my experience. I look forward to seeing how CCA will change in the future and hoping to help in any way I can.” - **Amanda Allen, Clinic GA**



Clinic for Counseling and Assessment

School of Medicine Columbia

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Logo for the new Clinic for Counseling and Assessment.



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


Save the Date

April 8th, 2026:
ARCA Pre-Conference
Symposium – [Register Here](#)

April 9th, 2026: Lunch and
Learn - [Register Here](#)

Early to mid April:
Advising – Summer '26 &
Fall '26 Registration

CHECK OUT OUR
SOCIALS!



Celebrating Aileen Pagán-Welch: ARCA Master’s Student of the Year

The Counseling and Rehabilitation program wants to recognize Aileen Pagán-Welch, a master’s student in the Counseling and Rehabilitation (C&R) program, as the recipient of the ARCA Master’s Student of the Year Award. This distinguished honor recognizes Aileen’s exceptional leadership, advocacy, and unwavering commitment to service within the Deaf and rehabilitation communities.



Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene and Aileen Pagan-Welch.

A dedicated member of ARCA, Aileen consistently exceeds expectations by bringing her full self to every endeavor. Her academic excellence is reflected in her outstanding 4.0 GPA, which is quite an achievement made even more impressive by the fact she was a full-time Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor with the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department until starting her internship. In this position, she served Deaf consumers across the state, demonstrating both professional expertise and deep community commitment.

Aileen’s leadership extends well beyond the classroom. She serves as Secretary for the South Carolina Association of the Deaf, a role that reflects the trust and respect she has earned among professionals and community members alike. Her involvement also includes active participation in university initiatives, outreach efforts, and educational programming, helping to strengthen vital connections between the Deaf community and the field of rehabilitation counseling.

Her passion for advocacy and education is evident in her scholarly and community contributions. Aileen has led presentations on Deaf advocacy during the C&R program’s Learning Community Saturday events and has served as a featured presenter at a family conference focused on supporting Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals. Through these efforts, she fosters awareness, promotes inclusion, and inspires both peers and community members.



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

Celebrating Aileen Pagán-Welch: ARCA Master’s Student of the Year

Aileen’s impact reaches beyond academic and professional settings. She has been recognized in Success Wisdom by Karen Putz for her advocacy and community engagement, further highlighting her influence and dedication. Her work consistently promotes accessibility, empowerment, and meaningful inclusion for Deaf individuals and their families.



ARCA Logo.

Through her leadership, scholarship, outreach, and service, Aileen Pagán-Welch embodies the core values of rehabilitation counseling. Her recognition as ARCA Master’s Student of the Year is a testament to her outstanding contributions and the lasting impact she continues to make in her field.

Lunch and Learn – Be the Difference: QPR Training for Suicide Prevention in Clinical Practice

Join us on **Thursday, April 9 at 12:00 PM** for a virtual Lunch and Learn featuring Jean Ann Lambert, MRC, Community Resource Director with Mental Health America of South Carolina.



Jean Ann Lambert.

This session will provide QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) Training, an evidence-based approach designed to equip participants with the tools to recognize the warning signs of self-harm and suicide, offer hope, and connect individuals to appropriate care. Whether you are in and/or preparing for practicum, internship, or future professional roles, this training will deepen your understanding of prevention practices and strengthen your confidence in supporting individuals at risk.

[RSVP HERE](#)

Webex Login Link:

<https://uscmcd.webex.com/uscmcd/j.php?MTID=m17e011dfa628b263b36664d45c323bb0>





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

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Scholarship

The Counseling and Rehabilitation program is proud to announce that it has been awarded a **Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Long Term Training Grant** (Award # H129B250036), which will provide funds to build the vocational workforce in South Carolina by training 25 scholars over the next five years who will go to work providing high quality vocational counseling services.

The program funds the final two years of tuition and fees for scholars who commit to work at South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation or its partner agencies for one year for every semester funded. The grant also provides funds for Supervisory personnel at SCVRD to obtain their Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credentials. We at Counseling and Rehabilitation are excited to partner with RSA on this important initiative.

If you are interested in learning more, please feel free to reach out to either of the Co-Principle Investigators on the grant:

- Michael Walsh:** Michael.walsh@uscmcd.sc.edu
- Taryn Richardson-Booth:** taryn.richardson@uscmcd.sc.edu

Note: Funded by U.S. Department of Education, Grant Number H129B250036:

"This project was funded by U.S. Department of Education under Grant Number H129B250036. For more information, contact the Counseling and Rehabilitation program at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine at 803-216-3696."

"The content was developed under a U.S. Department of Education grant H129B250036 and does not necessarily represent the policy of the Department."



RSA Logo.



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

ARCA Pre-Conference Symposium

Join the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) for their 2026 Pre-Conference Symposium on April 8 in Columbus, OH as they bring together rehabilitation counselors, counselor educators, students, disability advocates, and allies for focused learning, collaboration, and connection.

This symposium is approved for CRC and NBCC continuing education credits (up to 7 CE's)

**APRIL 8, 2026
START AT 8.00 AM
COLUMBUS STATE
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CONFERENCE CENTER,
COLUMBUS, OHIO**

ARCA
AMERICAN REHABILITATION COUNSELING ASSOCIATION

PRE-CONFERENCE SYMPOSIUM

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Join the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA) for our 2026 Pre-Conference Symposium on **April 8 in Columbus, OH** as we bring together rehabilitation counselors, counselor educators, students, disability advocates, and allies for focused learning, collaboration, and connection.

This symposium is approved for CRC and NBCC continuing education credits (up to 7 CE's)

APRIL 8, 2026 **START AT 8.00 AM** **COLUMBUS STATE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CONFERENCE CENTER COLUMBUS, OHIO**

We hope you will then also join us the next day, **April 9**, for 3 more education sessions with CE credit followed by our Annual Membership Meeting at 1:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION OPTIONS:
ARCA PROFESSIONAL MEMBER - \$90
ARCA STUDENT MEMBER - \$60
NON-MEMBER PROFESSIONAL - \$135
NON-MEMBER STUDENT - \$85

APRIL 9 REGISTRATION ONLY:
NON-MEMBER PROFESSIONAL - \$20
NON-MEMBER STUDENT - \$10

For More Information Visit www.arcaweb.org
and to register visit: <https://arcaweb.org/conferences/>

A blue flyer displaying details for the ARCA Pre Conference Symposium.



You may also join ARCA the next day, **April 9**, for 3 more education sessions with CE credit followed by their Annual Membership Meeting at 1:00 p.m. For more information, visit www.arcaweb.org.

[REGISTER FOR THE EVENT HERE](#)



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

Counseling and Rehabilitation Faculty Present at Lander University

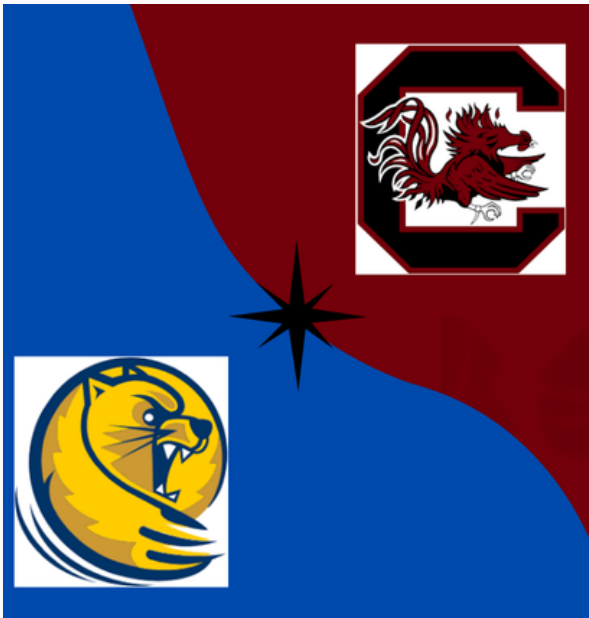
The University of South Carolina’s Counseling and Rehabilitation Program was proud to be represented at the recent *Culture Matters: The Heart of Health, Healing, and Care* Public Health Symposium, held March 27 at Lander University’s Barratt Hall Auditorium. The event brought together educators, healthcare professionals, students, and community members to explore the vital role culture plays in shaping health, healing, and inclusive care practices.



A graphic for the event.

Program Director **Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene** participated in the symposium as an invited presenter, contributing her expertise in counselor education, disability advocacy, and culturally responsive care. Her presentation highlighted the importance of understanding identity, lived experience, and systemic influences when working with individuals and families, reinforcing the rehabilitation counseling field’s commitment to holistic and person-centered practice.

Dr. Sacco-Bene joined an accomplished group of speakers, including professionals from public health, philosophy, and disability advocacy, all working toward a shared goal of fostering compassionate, inclusive systems of care. The event also recognized community partners and advocates whose work bridges research, lived experience, and practice.



A logo representing USC and Lander University.

USC Counseling and Rehabilitation is honored to see its faculty contributing to important regional conversations that advance culturally informed counseling and rehabilitation services. Participation in events such as this symposium reflects the program’s ongoing commitment to leadership, advocacy, and excellence in counselor education.



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

USC Counseling & Rehabilitation Program Engages Community Partners at Tri-County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse Event

The University of South Carolina’s Counseling and Rehabilitation Program recently hosted a Lunch and Learn session on site at Tri-County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse that brought together students, educators, and professionals committed to strengthening collaboration and community engagement across the region.

The event provided an opportunity for meaningful dialogue among helping professionals, community leaders, and students, including in-person participation from students representing both USC’s Counseling and Rehabilitation Program and Claflin University. Attendees explored shared priorities related to workforce development, wellness, and expanding access to supportive services within local communities.



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

Representing the USC Counseling and Rehabilitation Program, faculty member **Dr. Michael J. Walsh** played an active role in the event, contributing his expertise in counseling, psychiatric rehabilitation, and professional wellness. Dr. Walsh engaged participants in discussions centered on promoting resilience, enhancing wellbeing, and supporting individuals through strengths-based and recovery-oriented approaches—areas that reflect his ongoing professional and educational work within the program.

Blackboard: Did You Know?

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



Blackboard

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.



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

Wellness Corner

As the days grow longer and the sun stays out later, take advantage of the extra daylight to spend more time outside. Even a short walk, sitting in the sun, or moving your body outdoors can boost mood, energy, and overall well-being. Longer daylight hours can also be a great reminder to reset routines by prioritizing sleep, hydration, and mindful breaks throughout the day. Small habits that help you reconnect with nature and sunlight can make a meaningful difference in your mental and physical wellness.



A graphic depicting sunshine.

Writing Tip: Bias-Free Language

The language to use where disability is concerned is evolving. The overall principle for using disability language is to maintain the integrity (worth and dignity) of all individuals as human beings. Language should be selected with the understanding that the expressed preference of people with disabilities regarding identification supersedes matters of style. Both person-first and identity first approaches to language are designed to respect disabled persons; both are fine choices overall. It is permissible to use either approach or to mix person-first and identityfirst language unless or until you know that a group clearly prefers one approach, in which case, you should use the preferred approach.

- Person-First:** “a youth with epilepsy,” “people with intellectual disabilities,” etc.
- Identity First:** “blind person,” “autistic person,” etc.

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

Pet of the Month



Sammie poses for the camera!

Meet our Pet of the Month, Sammie – the beloved service dog of **C&R student Kaylyn Sinclair!** Sammie is not only an incredible source of support for Kaylyn, but also a warm, friendly presence for the entire C&R community. When she’s off the clock, Sammie enjoys relaxing after a hard day’s work by playing outside with her best friend, Milo. Look at that sweet face!

Show us your pet by filling out the form below:

[Pet of the Month](#)

Save the Date

4/8/2026 - ARCA Pre-Conference Symposium -
[Register Here](#)

4/9/2026 - Lunch and Learn: Spring 2026 QPR
Training for Suicide Prevention in Clinical Practice
[Register Here](#)

Early to mid April - Advising - Summer '26 & Fall '26
Registration