

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)

Brain Injury Awareness Month

Governor Henry McMaster officially proclaimed March as Brain Injury Awareness Month in SC. Brain Injury Awareness Month is an annual observance dedicated to raising awareness, reducing stigma, and promoting resources for individuals and families affected by brain injury.

In partnership with the Brain Injury Association of SC (BIASC), the Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA) teamed up to participate in the BIASC Walk, Run and Roll for Brain Injury Awareness on March 23rd. The aim of this year's event was to raise \$10,000 to continue supporting brain injury survivors and their families. Every dollar raised went towards helping BIASC expand vital programs that offer hope, healing, and connection to those affected by brain injury.



BIASC Logo for the 2025 Walk, Run & Roll for brain injury awareness

This year, BIASC announced that the goal of \$10,000 was met and extended to \$15,000 based on the outpouring of donations. Should you wish to donate, there is still time remaining and [donations are accepted electronically here.](#)

You can also keep up with all the happenings at BIASC on their [calendar of events.](#)

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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)

Save the Date

April 1st, 2025:
Lunch & Learn
RSVP HERE

April 10th, 2025:
Writing Workshop
RSVP HERE

April 22nd, 2025:
CRSA Safe Space
RSVP HERE

CHECK OUT OUR SOCIALS



Brain Injury Awareness Month



A metal stand displays colorful masks with descriptions, symbolizing artists' experiences and resilience.

"Brain injury is not a one-time event—it's an ongoing journey. BIASC is committed to supporting survivors and their families every step of the way by providing education, resources, and a platform for their voices to be heard."

- Joyce Davis, Executive Director, BIASC

Exciting Opportunities Ahead: Join the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment

Are you passionate about making a difference in underserved communities? The USC School of Medicine's Clinic for Counseling and Assessment (CCA) is opening in Spring 2025—and we're building something meaningful that you can be a part of.

Housed within the Counseling and Rehabilitation Program and supported by the SC Center for Rural and Primary Healthcare, the CCA will provide accessible mental health and assessment services to residents in Orangeburg, Calhoun, Bamberg, Fairfield, and Chester counties—areas with significant unmet needs. As a student-operated, faculty-directed clinic, the CCA offers you the chance to gain real-world clinical experience while directly impacting the well-being of rural South Carolina communities.

We're also excited to announce that services will be delivered both in-person and through remote/telehealth formats, allowing us to overcome transportation and access barriers that often limit care in rural areas.



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

Join the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment

This hybrid model is essential for our outreach strategy, enabling you to gain supervised experience using both traditional and digital tools, including telehealth platforms and innovative digital technologies such as Virtual Reality and remote monitoring platforms like Carium. These tools enable us to personalize care plans, track client progress, and maintain continuity, even in geographically isolated settings.

We're actively building collaborative partnerships with community organizations, including the Tri-County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (TCCADA), Fairfield Behavioral Health Services, the Hazel Pittman Center, and Palmetto Care Connections. These relationships will support our holistic and integrated approach, providing students with exposure to real-time interdisciplinary collaboration.



A brick building with a "University of South Carolina School of Medicine" sign.

Student Involvement Opportunities:

- Graduate Assistantships will be offered to support day-to-day clinic operations, intake processes, and outreach programming.
- Scholarships will be awarded to students committed to working in rural communities during or after their clinical training.
- Supervised Clinical Experience in individual, group, and family counseling, including opportunities for specialization in areas such as addiction, rehabilitation, mental health, and career counseling.

As a Counselor-in-Training, you will engage in all phases of client service—initial intake, assessment, goal setting, treatment planning, and documentation—all while being supported by licensed faculty and trained clinical supervisors. You'll use evidence-based practices and complete detailed treatment plans, biopsychosocial assessments, and progress notes while adhering to ethical, legal, and cultural standards outlined in the CCA's clinical manual.

Tech-Savvy Service Delivery: Students will also use digital platforms like Carium for remote care management. Through this system, you'll learn how to:

- Communicate securely with clients and care teams
- Track appointments and video sessions
- Share care plans and educational resources
- Maintain electronic records in compliance with HIPAA standards

This level of tech integration is critical to addressing service gaps in rural South Carolina, where access to consistent, culturally responsive care is often limited.



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

Join the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment

As we prepare for launch, we’re also initiating a fundraising campaign—including a clinic naming opportunity—to help sustain and grow this work well into the future.

“This clinic will be more than just a service provider—it will be a lifeline for communities facing some of the toughest challenges in mental health and well-being,” said Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene, Clinical Associate Professor and Program Director. “Our goal is to make a lasting impact by engaging communities, connecting individuals to essential resources, and providing personalized care.”

If you’re looking for a powerful way to grow as a clinician while making meaningful change, the Clinic for Counseling and Assessment could be your next step.

Dr. Sacco-Bene Nominated for Rehabilitation Counselor Educator of the Year Award

Author: Dr. Michael Walsh

At the heart of any successful graduate program is a devoted and committed faculty. Dr. Christine Sacco Bene, the Director of the Counseling and Rehabilitation program in the School of Medicine embodies the spirit of that sentiment in her every action. Dr. Sacco Bene was recently recognized for her outstanding efforts, being named the **Rehabilitation Counselor Educator of the Year by the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA)**.



Dr. Sacco-Bene, with brown hair and glasses, smiles in front of a dark background

Dr Sacco Bene has led the C&R program to new heights during her time as Program Director, nearly doubling enrollment numbers and developing two new specialty tracks in Career Counseling and Addictions Counseling.

In addition, she has been instrumental in the development of a student run and faculty directed clinic that will be opening for new clients in the Spring of 2025. In addition to this excellent work, Dr. Sacco Bene, Dr SB to her students, maintains her role as a dedicated student mentor, brining students into writing and research projects, co-leading several research studies, all while working closely with faculty colleagues to nurture students’ academic and professional development. If all of that weren’t enough, Dr. SB will begin her term as the incoming President of the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association this coming July. The School of Medicine and the University are truly fortunate to call Dr. Christine Sacco Bene one of the family.



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

Student Spotlight: Allie Ledbetter Nominated for ARCA Masters Student of the Year Award



Allie Ledbetter, pictured in a green shirt with a black background

The ARCA community is proud to recognize Allie Ledbetter as the 2025 ARCA Master’s Student of the Year. A dedicated advocate for individuals with intellectual and neurodevelopmental disabilities, Allie has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to both academic excellence and professional development in the field of counseling.

From her first year in her Counseling and Rehabilitation program, Allie has actively sought opportunities to expand her knowledge and hands-on experience. She is deeply passionate about working alongside youth and adolescents with intellectual disabilities and their families. Her involvement in professional organizations,

including her leadership as Vice President of CRSA and her volunteer work with ACA and ARCA, reflects her eagerness to learn, grow, and connect with others in the field.

Allie’s aspirations extend beyond her Master’s program, as she plans to pursue a doctorate to further her impact as both a practitioner and future educator. With a strong personal commitment to ethical bilingual counseling, she is actively working to gain specialized training in Spanish counseling and medical terminology, ensuring she can provide high-quality services to diverse communities.

Inside the classroom, Allie enriches discussions with her thoughtful contributions and ability to bridge theory with practice. Her leadership, dedication, and passion for advocacy made her an outstanding nominee for this award and a promising future leader in the counseling profession.

Congratulations, Allie, on this well-deserved recognition!





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

School of Medicine Semi Formal

Author: Aileen Welch



Three women in elegant dresses smile in front of a brightly lit "USC SOM" sign adorned with colorful balloons, capturing a joyful moment at the Semi Formal.

On March 7th, 2025, the USC School of Medicine hosted their annual Semi-formal event. Last year, this event took place at the Riverbanks Zoo. This year, it was hosted at the SC State Museum. There was a good crowd present upon arrival, including many of the amazing students that comprise the Counseling and Rehabilitation program. All were dressed to the nines! There was music, dancing, and appetizers galore!! A few of us got to enjoy the magic of the 360 spinning camera! The museum was open as well and we were all encouraged to walk through it. The model of the USS Hunley submarine was great, as well as all the local history. The small theater in the back

was showing short clips of Zorro in black and white, which was very entertaining to watch! One of the highlights of the evening was the balloon artist, who was creating masterpieces from giraffe hats to motorbikes. Yours truly got herself a balloon sword... one to rival Zorro's! Other highlights include all the amazing dancing by the students in this program! Who knew we had so many talented and agile dancers! You don't want to get mixed up in a dance battle with any of them! Overall, it was a great night and a great way to decompress after a stressful few weeks! Looking forward to next year!



Two women, one in a masquerade mask and one holding a balloon sword, pose.

Fairfield Behavioral Health: 5k Run for Recovery

Fairfield Behavioral Health Services is excited to host the 25th Annual 5K Run/Walk on April 19, 2025, in observance of Alcohol Awareness Month. This event is dedicated to raising awareness about the impact of alcohol use while promoting prevention, treatment, and recovery efforts within the community.

Participants of all ages and fitness levels are encouraged to join in this meaningful event, whether running or walking, to show their support for individuals and families affected by alcohol-related challenges. The race provides an opportunity to come together, promote healthy lifestyles, and contribute to a vital cause.



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



"Run for Recovery 5k" run/walk vibrant poster with man running.

Fairfield Behavioral Health: 5k Run for Recovery

Mark your calendars and get ready to make a difference!

[Register using this link!](#)

Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day Workshop with Alabama State University



Alabama State University logo in yellow and black with a building in the center.

National Rehabilitation Counselors Appreciation Day on March 22nd recognizes the work of Certified Rehabilitation Counselors (CRCs) who help individuals with disabilities achieve their personal, social, psychological, career, and independent living goals.

In partnership with the College of Health Sciences Rehabilitation Studies Department at Alabama State University, Dr. Christine Sacco-Bene recently delivered a virtual presentation alongside Dr. Daniel Balva entitled **Visionary Leadership: Advancing the Field of Rehabilitation Counseling** as part of their National Rehabilitation Counselor Appreciation Day Workshop.

The virtual presentation shared information about contributions of key disability leaders and advocates and their lasting impact, the breadth and depth of the rehabilitation profession, including benefits of effective collaboration to further build it together across various rehabilitation sectors, and opportunities for service, volunteerism, and leadership roles to advance the field of rehabilitation counseling.

Proceeds from the conference were designated to the "Jasmine Marshall Foundation" in the COHS Department of Rehabilitation Studies.



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CRSA

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA) has a ton of exciting events coming up over the next few months and is actively accepting new members to the organization. Not a member of CRSA yet? Joining is simple—just Venmo LaurenMichaels17 the \$20 annual fee for your membership and send her a quick email with your full name to lauren.michaels@uscm.edu.



Hayden and Jerzy smile in front of an exhibit display featuring mobility equipment.

Assistive Technology Expo

Students from CRSA recently attended the Assistive Technology Expo, an annual event hosted by the University of South Carolina’s Center for Disability Resources. This expo provided an invaluable opportunity for students to explore the latest advancements in assistive technology, network with professionals in the field, and gain hands-on experience with tools designed to enhance accessibility and independence for individuals with disabilities.

Through interactive exhibits, live demonstrations, and expert-led sessions, CRSA members deepened their

understanding of how assistive technology intersects with rehabilitation counseling. This experience will help shape their approach to client-centered care, ensuring they are well-equipped to advocate for and implement innovative solutions in their future practice. The event reinforced the importance of accessibility and inclusion, aligning with CRSA’s mission to support and empower individuals with disabilities through evidence-based rehabilitation practices.



The Expo features grid-arranged booths with displays, as diverse attendees engage with exhibitors.

Upcoming Events

CRSA Writing Workshop 4/10- The CRSA is excited to host a virtual writing workshop in collaboration with the University Writing Center on April 10 from 4:00 to 5:00 PM.
[RSVP HERE](#)

CRSA Safe Space 4/22 - CRSA will be hosting a safe space hour on Tuesday, April 22nd from 4:00-5:00 p.m. It is open to all – an honoring and respectful space.
[RSVP HERE](#)



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

Wellness Corner

The Ahead App is a platform designed to enhance emotional intelligence through engaging, bite-sized exercises—earning it the nickname "the Duolingo for your emotional intelligence." Just as Duolingo makes language learning fun and accessible, Ahead uses interactive lessons to help users develop key emotional skills like self-awareness, empathy, and stress management. By practicing daily, users can improve their emotional resilience, build healthier relationships, and navigate challenges more effectively. Whether for personal growth or professional development, Ahead makes mastering emotional intelligence both easy and enjoyable.



The image features a purple blob winking, set against a vibrant blue background.

Join CRSA’s Upcoming Writing Workshop

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA) is excited to host a virtual writing workshop in collaboration with the University Writing Center on **April 10 from 4:00 to 5:00 PM**. This interactive session is designed to support students in refining their academic and professional writing skills, with a focus on clarity, organization, and effective communication. Whether working on research papers, case studies, or personal statements, participants will receive valuable guidance from writing experts to enhance their writing confidence. RSVP using the link below:

[RSVP HERE](#)



Freya, the yellow lab, lays on her bed while looking at the camera.

Pet of the Month

I am Freya Best. I am 3 years old and a pure Labrador Retriever. I can give the best, big hugs. I love to play fetch, eating sunflower seeds and bananas, and sunbathing. Lastly, it is fun to get the zoomies in the house--it makes Amelia laugh.

Show us your pet by filling out the form below:

[Pet of the Month](#)

Save the Date

4/1 - Lunch & Learn: Barriers to Access for Adolescents

Join Dee Robinson, LISW-CPS, as she presents **Barriers to Access for Adolescents** on April 1, 2025 to raise awareness regarding general barriers, discuss level of care barriers and available services across our state. The event offers both in person and virtual attendance options to participants:

In Person: Attendees may join the presentation in person at the Tri-County Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse William J. McCord Adolescent Treatment Facility (910 Cook Road, Orangeburg, SC 29118). For those who wish to attend the event in person, please indicate your selection when you [register here](#) and driving/parking instructions will be sent to you prior to the event.

[RSVP HERE](#)

4/10- CRSA Writing Workshop

The Counseling and Rehabilitation Student Association (CRSA) is excited to host a virtual writing workshop in collaboration with the University Writing Center on April 10 from 4:00 to 5:00 PM. This interactive session is designed to support students in refining their academic and professional writing skills, with a focus on clarity, organization, and effective communication. Whether working on research papers, case studies, or personal statements, participants will receive valuable guidance from writing experts to enhance their writing confidence.

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4/22- CRSA Safe Space

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