



Research UpDATE

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Utah State University • College of Education and Human Services • Office of Research Services

From the Associate Dean

This issue features the Special Education and Rehabilitation (SPER) Department. Hardworking faculty in SPER brought in nearly two million dollars in outside funding this year. They also authored 29 publications, served on 26 editorial boards or ad hoc reviews, and presented at 44 conferences.

Congratulations go to Pam Hudson, SPER faculty, who authored (along with Susan Miller from UNLV) a new mathematics education text, "Designing and Implementing Mathematics Instruction for Students with Diverse Learning Needs."

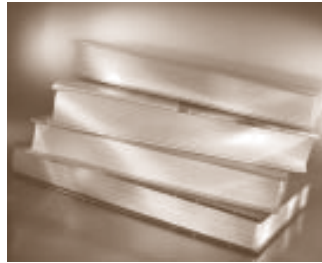
Also of note, student researcher Brianne Bartlett, mentored by Scott Hunsaker in Elementary Education, presented a paper at the sixth annual Undergraduate Research Day on Capitol Hill in Salt Lake City.

Another item of interest is the over \$250,000 in license agreements generated by the College of Education and Human Services during the last fiscal year. This amount comprised the majority of Utah State University's license revenue and was a result of software development within the Center for Persons with Disabilities.

A special "Thanks!" to all the faculty and staff who contribute to the outstanding ranking of the College in the area of research.

Jim Dorward

Clearinghouse Funded



Special Education and Rehabilitation (specifically, Jared Schultz and Julie Smart) recently received a \$1.5 million award to establish a National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials (NCRTM).

The NCRTM is a federally funded project from the Rehabilitation Services Administration that provides a centralized repository for materials developed under their training grants program. Materials include a wide assortment of documents, videos, and other media related to disabilities, and services to persons that experience disabilities. The majority of training materials and resources available in the NCRTM collection are not available in traditional libraries. These materials are most often utilized by agencies, organizations, and individuals within the rehabilitation community.

The NCRTM has a 43 year history at Oklahoma State University, but was recently moved to Utah State University. With the change in location comes a new focus on digitizing all of the materials in the repository and making them available through the internet. Additionally, the NCRTM is spearheading a na-

tional recruitment effort to bring new professionals into the field and is developing a strong continuing education program for rehabilitation professionals across the nation.

The NCRTM provides a unique opportunity for the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation to engage in educational and research opportunities across the nation, and is the central point of information dissemination for rehabilitation professionals. NCRTM materials are available to any interested persons, including Utah State faculty, students, and staff. The materials can be accessed at <http://ncrtm.ed.usu.edu>.

Researching Rehabilitation Research

A timely article, *Rehabilitation Research in the 21st Century: Concerns and Recommendation from Members of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (Rehabilitation Education, Volume 19, No. 1, 2005)*, coauthored by Jared Schultz, assistant professor in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation,



Jared Schultz, assistant professor, Special Education and Rehabilitation

gathered important data to be used in building a rehabilitation research agenda for the 21st century. The authors used a focus group interview and an open-ended survey to catalog the perspectives of 63 members of the National Council on Rehabilitation Education (NCRE).

Three of the four research questions that guided this inquiry and a summary of the findings follow:

Question: What have been the most valuable contributions, to date, of rehabilitation research to both the profession and society?

Answer: Many responses reflected the sentiment that “most, if not all, rehab research has brought attention to the needs of rehab consumers and the importance of the profession.” Research was also perceived to have “enhanced the inclusion of people with disabilities” in multiple life arenas.

Question: What topics should be further explored in rehabilitation research?

Answer: Participants believed there is a need to explore (a) rehabilitation interventions, (b) rehabilitation outcomes, (c) client involvement in rehabilitation, (d) client and counselor characteristics, (e) psychosocial and developmental issues, and (f) rehabilitation education.

Question: What barriers do rehabilitation researchers encounter in conducting rehabilitation research?

Answer: Lack of sufficient resources, lack of proper training in research methods among researchers and practitioners, inaccessibility to research among practitioners, lack of

research utilization, and insufficient attention to issues of diversity were concerns expressed by participants.

Taken together, the results of this preliminary data gathering offer a springboard for further discussions. In particular, researchers would be wise to recognize the complexity of the phenomenon of disability. Bridging the gap between research and practice should be a task of primary importance.

Why Special Educators Leave and Where They Go



Two Special Education faculty, Ronda Menlove and Chuck Salzberg, and graduate student, Lori Garnes authored a recent article, *Why Special Educators Leave and Where They Go*, focussed on issues of attrition and retention among special education professionals. The results of their study are included in the following abstract from *Teacher Education and Special Education*, Volume 27, No. 4, 2004.

With chronic and critical shortages of special education professionals evident throughout the United States, the issues of attrition and retention are on the forefront of analysis. Reasons why special education professionals in Utah

left their positions were explored in a three-year study of special education attrition.

The causes and patterns of attrition have been analyzed, giving valuable insight into how the loss of qualified special education professionals can be prevented. The most common reason for leaving listed by special education teachers and speech language pathologists was that they “moved out of state.” School psychologists reported “retirement” and “moved out of state” as their two most common reason for leaving public school positions. The most common reasons for leaving listed by all special education professionals were “moved out of state”, “retired”, and “transferred to general education.”

Moving and retiring are most likely not preventable, however, assisting special educators who move to obtain positions as they relocate may be an effective method of retaining them in the field of special education. Preventable attrition such as transferring to general education and changing school districts could be addressed by university faculty and school administrators to better understand why special educators transfer and what can be done to prevent the transfers. This understanding could lead to improved strategies to minimize attrition and promote retention of special education professionals.

The authors believe research that is more precise in its specification of reasons for attrition is needed. Additionally, Menlove, Salzberg, and Garnes believe it would be helpful to study the characteristics of special educators who **do** stay in their positions for the length of their careers.

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