

# **UW-Stout: New national training center provides programming, credentials for vocational rehabilitation leaders**

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Menomonie, Wis. – The University of Wisconsin-Stout [Vocational Rehabilitation Institute](#) is offering a new, nationally certified professional education program: the [National Training Center for Transformational Rehabilitation Leadership](#).

The six-month online TRLT program prepares vocational rehabilitation agency leaders to support counseling professionals and improve services that assist people with disabilities in career development and community inclusion.

“The training curriculum is designed to develop leaders who have the ability to transform organizations to advance the rehabilitation counseling profession and improve system outcomes,” said SVRI Executive Director Kyle Walker.

The first group of professionals in the program, 18 from 10 states, began classes in January.

**A nationwide partnership**

TRLT was designed in partnership with SVRI, the [University of Massachusetts-Boston's Institute for Community Inclusion](#), the [Commission on Rehabilitation Counselor Certification](#), in collaboration with the [Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation](#). SVRI serves as the curriculum home.

"This partnership with ICI and CRCC will substantially contribute to the advancement of the profession of rehabilitation counseling," Walker said.

"We recognize the importance of committed leadership in rehabilitation programs directed at purposeful, conscious and inspired change," added TRLT co-founder Russ Thelin, Senior Policy Fellow at UMass-Boston ICI.

"Transformational leadership skills, when learned and applied, provide leaders and those they lead to work and advance each other to higher levels of success. Such leadership fosters cultures which inspire greater achievement for rehabilitation professionals, which in turn creates greater success for those they serve," he said. "Professionals in this field are clearly hungry for this type of leadership, as are those this profession serves. TRLT and the credentials it leads to is a natural next step for providing additional resources and points of connection to advance this important need."

## **Core leadership skills and earned credentials**

Led by a cadre of experienced instructor-mentors, the curriculum focuses on six core leadership domains: collaborative, conscious, creative, cultural, inspirational and purpose-driven leadership.

Walker and Erin Nierenhausen, senior instructional specialist at SVRI, serve as TRLT instructors. Walker also serves as a peer mentor, providing leadership to state VR agencies in South Carolina and Utah.

TRLT focuses on rehabilitation leadership research, publishing evidence-based practices, creating and implementing toolkits, and assisting with federal and state grant funded projects.

Applied learning activities allow participants to explore real world concepts and tools and to discuss results within their cohort for feedback and support. Participants also work toward a final capstone project that can immediately impact their agency.

The program leads to a national industry-recognized Certified Rehabilitation Leader credential managed by the CRCC. It also counts toward continuing education units to maintain the CRL and offers an alumni peer mentoring program.

“The second cohort will begin in June, and we have already reached our registration minimum with eight registrants from New Jersey and California. West Virginia requested a private cohort group of six that will begin the course in April,” Walker said.

There are 78 state vocational rehabilitation agencies. Federal law allows states to have a single agency or to have an agency that specializes in serving people with visual impairments and an agency that serves individuals with all other disability types, Walker explained. There are also VR agencies in Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands. The state-federal VR program serves an average of 400,000 people with disabilities each year.

SVRI was formed in 1966 through Department of Health, Education and Welfare federal grants. Located in the Vocational Rehabilitation building on campus, it generates more than \$4 million annually through grants, contracts and other federal, state and local partnerships. SVRI provides solutions to positively impact the future of people with disabilities through services, research and education programs that prepare VR professionals.

*UW-Stout is [Wisconsin's Polytechnic University](#), with a focus on applied learning, collaboration with business and industry, and career outcomes.*