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## **Andrea Nerlich – Rehabilitation Counseling**

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### **Conference Poster Presentations**

1. **Nerlich, A. P., & Mitus, J. S.** (2019, April 18). *Enhancing the rehabilitation counseling graduate admissions process through the assessment of soft skills and professional dispositions*. National Council on Rehabilitation Education, 19th Annual Rehabilitation Educators Conference, San Diego, CA.

**SUMMARY:** In this poster session, the presenters will introduce the Soft Skills Assessment for Admission Model as an enhancement to the traditional graduate admissions process for Rehabilitation Counseling (RC) Programs. In recent years, professional counseling programs have encountered a rise in issues regarding students who struggle with soft skills and professionalism. Processes exist to address these issues throughout a program, such as remedial planning; however, proactive measures are needed earlier, in the admissions process, to differentiate candidates who may not have the requisite soft skills needed for program entry and success, despite satisfying traditional academic admission criteria. The presenters will provide an overview of and plans to pilot the model in Fall 2019 in an RC Program at a university on the East Coast.

2. Dalton, J. A., **Nerlich, A. P., & Boland, E. A.** (2019, April). *Athena's daughters: Addressing the needs of women in rehabilitation education and research*. National Council on Rehabilitation Education, 19th Annual Rehabilitation Educators Conference, San Diego, CA.

**SUMMARY:** The Athena Collective is a grassroots movement by female rehabilitation educators with the mission is to empower women by creating a space and voice where freedom, flexibility, authenticity, and equality are embraced to allow ideas and work to organically grow. Our goal is to improve the quality of life for women in research and academe by expanding affiliations and mentoring. We will address issues facing women in rehabilitation, plans for research, outreach, and advocacy, and opportunities for sustainable advancement of support for women in and seeking to enter the rehabilitation research and academic fields.

### **Professional Presentations:**

1. **Nerlich, A. P., Homa, D., & Tidwell, P.** (2019, October 14). Perceptions of the vocational evaluation profession: A past, present, and future perspective (Invited Featured Session). 2019 National Forum on Issues in Vocational Evaluation and Assessment. Richmond, VA.

**SUMMARY:** This interactive session presented the findings of a qualitative study of the past, present, and future perceptions of the state of vocational evaluation (VE) practice, as well as the responsibility of professional organizations to respond to the needs of the profession. The choice of open-ended questions was to capture “voices of the field” and highlight best practices, concerns, future directions, and obstacles for the continuation and promotion of the profession. With changing economic times and a profession that is increasingly evidence-based, these findings can be parlayed into a vision for the profession and VE service provision to people with disabilities. Participants were encouraged to provide their insights to enhance collaboration, create inclusion, and articulate the benefit of sustaining and strengthening our discipline.

2. **Nerlich, A. P.** (2019, October 18). Reinventing rehabilitation counselor identity (Invited Plenary Address). AVRASA 2019 Annual Conference, New York, NY

**SUMMARY:** This session explored individual and collective identity as a rehabilitation counselor in the current practice environment. Who am I? Who are we? What are our core values? What does this profession “call me?” How can I make it what I want it to be? Active participation and personal introspection were facilitated through large group discussion. Objectives of the session were to: (1) reassert passion and purpose for rehabilitation counseling; (2) explore the dynamics of rehabilitation counselor identity; and (3) define new opportunities and direction for the profession.