

## Sue Reeves, MRC, CRC, LVRC



Program Director  
Licensed/Certified Rehabilitation Counselor  
Aggies Elevated at Utah State University

When I was the public relations specialist at Utah State University's Center for Persons with Disabilities, I was tasked with creating a vision for what a new, inclusive post-secondary education program for young adults with intellectual disabilities could look like. At a fundraising event in October 2013, my life changed forever.

Three families committed funds to start the program the following fall. In January 2014, I began a master of rehabilitation counseling program, and in August, we had our first students on campus. On October 1, 2015, we received federal grant funding to expand the program and I became the full-time Career Success Coordinator. (I successfully completed the CRC exam on October 3 of that year.) In May 2016, I graduated with my MRC as our first cohort of students with intellectual disabilities graduated from college! I became the program director in 2018 (and include the CRC scope of practice statement in my e-mail signature).

Pre-Covid-19, our students' one-year post-graduation employment rate was approximately 90%, at or above minimum wage. One student has married, another is building a house with her boyfriend. Two students have gone on to achieve associate's degrees, and two are pursuing bachelor's degrees. These accomplishments were unsupported by our program because they learned the skills they needed to advocate for themselves and get the community supports that help them to be independent.

This is my why: At the fundraising event in October 2013, I listened to rehabilitation counseling faculty talk about what keeps them awake at night. They described the reality of young adults with intellectual disabilities who sit on their parents' couches playing video games all day because they don't have the opportunity for post-secondary education, they can't get or keep a job, they miss out on social interaction. They want the same things their peers without disabilities want: meaningful work, living as independently as possible, and taking their place within their community. With a CRC's strengths-based rather than deficits-based approach, our students are achieving their goals.