

**Auburn University – Vocational Evaluation Forensic Certificate Program
Implementation & Outcomes Survey Year 1
RSA Innovative Grant
March 2021**

RSA Innovative Grant Purpose

The RSA Innovative grant project at Auburn University, known as the Vocational Evaluation Forensic Certificate (VEFC), aims to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities by focusing on the employment of those working in vocational rehabilitation (VR). The main outcome of the VEFC is to reduce the number of VR vacancies by providing evidence-based practice (EBP), as well as greater forensic, vocational evaluation, and employment expertise to professionals and paraprofessionals. By allowing students and professionals with a bachelor's degree or higher into the program and providing financial funding, those enrolled in the VEFC can participate in on-campus or distance education courses related to forensic rehabilitation and vocational evaluation. Administered through the Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and Counseling (SERC) in the College of Education, this program requires one year of coursework that, upon completion, results in a graduate training certificate that will advance the field of vocational rehabilitation and improve employment outcomes for professionals and ultimately consumers.

Implementation & Outcome Survey Purpose

The Implementation and Outcome Survey is a method of gauging the efficiency and effectiveness of the grant program in accomplishing its goals and objectives. As a component of the second year workplan, the I & O Survey was sent to students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders in September of 2021 to evaluate the goals from year one, which was a planning

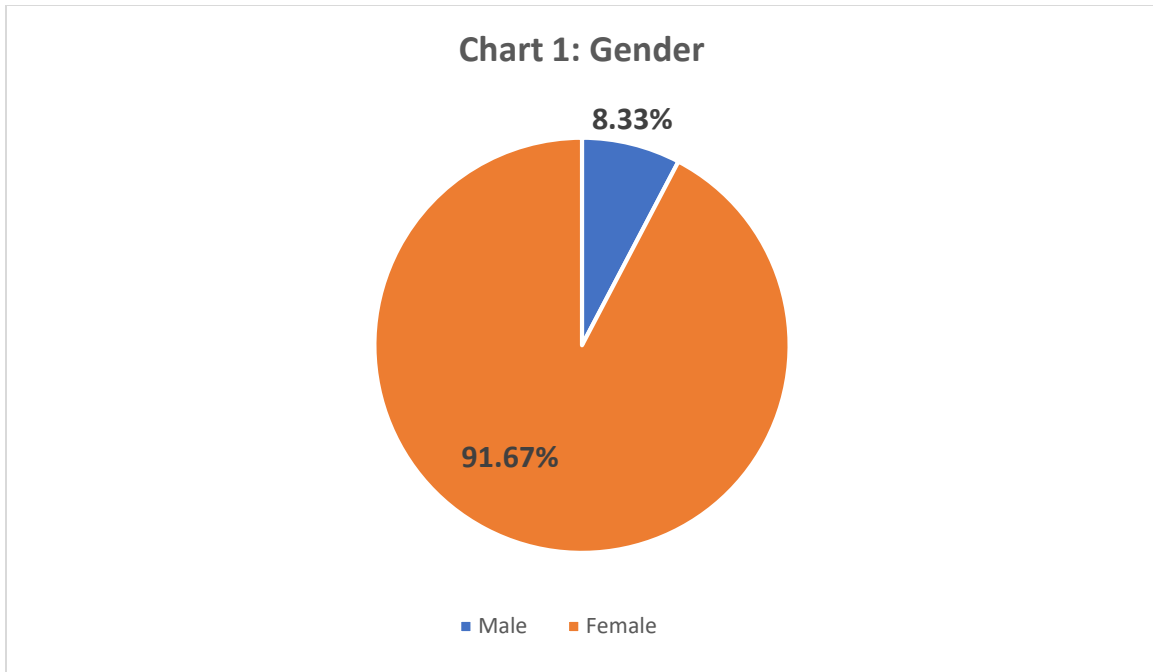
year. This self-report survey allowed those involved with the VEFC to evaluate the program on its effectiveness and efficiency in meeting each of its objectives, in addition to providing feedback about the program outcomes that have been accomplished thus far. The following sections provide the survey results of the Year 1 (2021) I & O Survey.

Results of the Implementation Survey

All data were collected using Qualtrics, a web-based survey instrument, and analyzed using SPSS statistical software. The survey invitation was initially sent during the first week of September 2021 and remained open for about 8 weeks, with two reminder invitations sent within that time period. A total of 25 completed surveys were obtained, resulting in about a 56% response rate.

Findings: Demographics

Participants were asked to provide their gender, ethnicity, race, occupation, years of experience, and primary affiliation with this project. As individuals may have multiple roles within the project, respondents were permitted to provide more than one response to primary affiliation. Additionally, one participant did not report any demographic information, thus the demographic data reflects only 24 of the total 25 respondents. As displayed in *Chart 1: Gender*, most of the respondents were female (N = 22, 91.67%), with males representing 8.33% (N = 2).

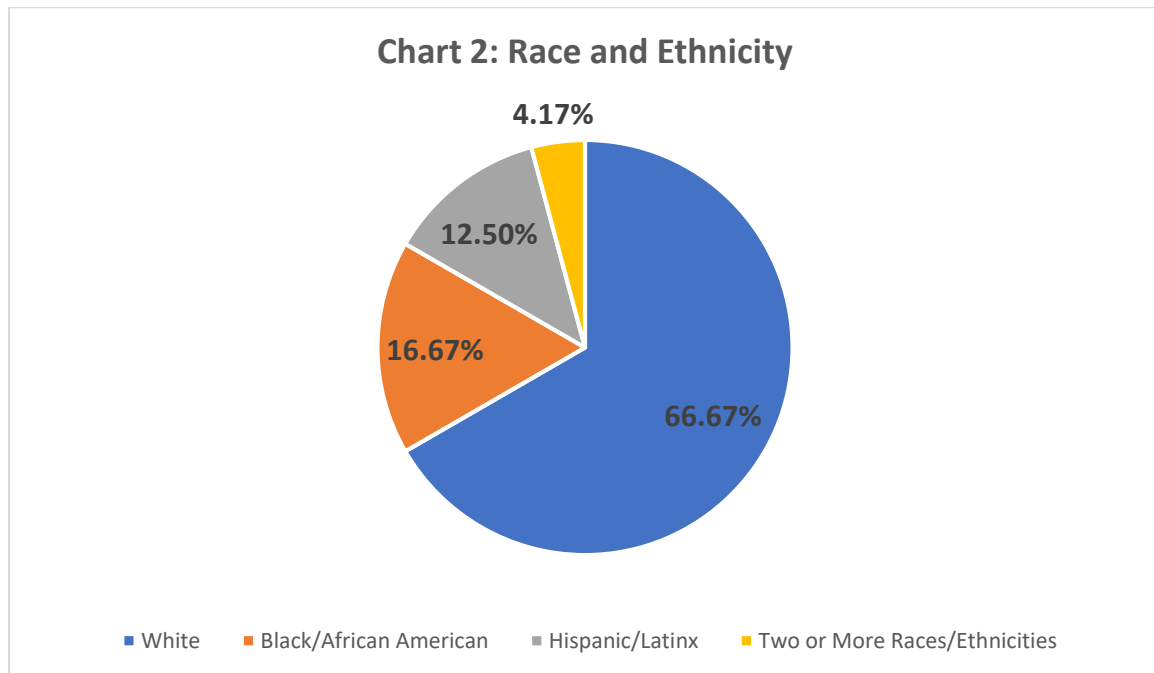


In terms of race and ethnicity, respondents could choose among the following:

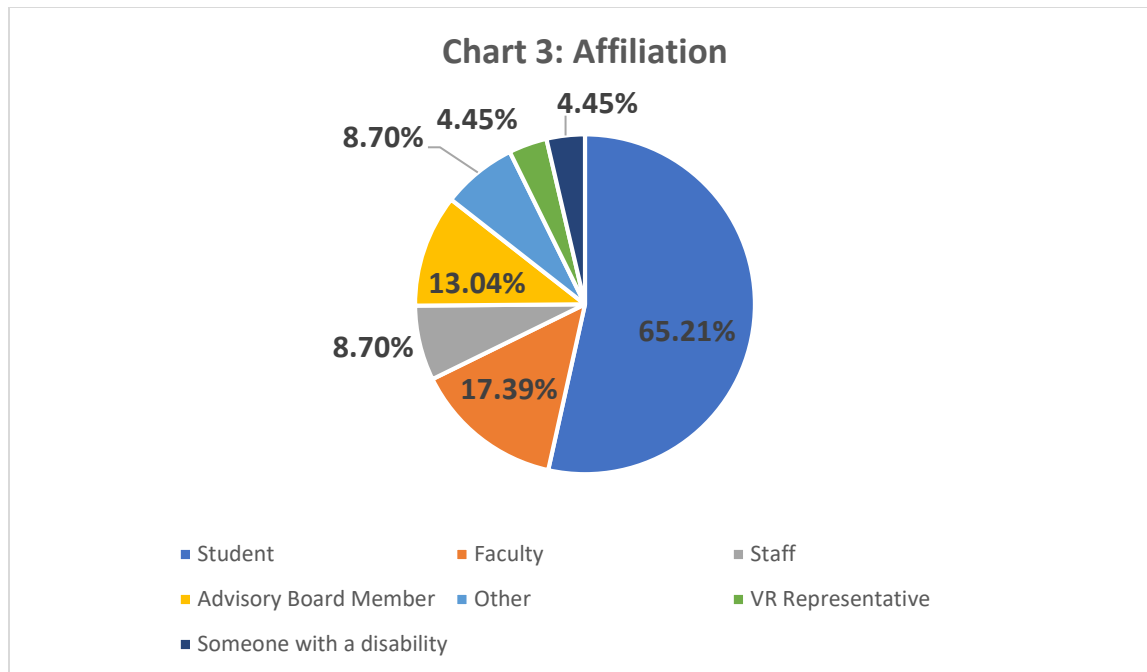
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latinx
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White (neither Hispanic nor Latinx)
- Middle Eastern
- Two or more races
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Again, one person refrained from answering, so only 24 respondents reported their race/ethnicity. *Chart 2: Race and Ethnicity* shown below indicates that of those who reported their race and ethnicity 66.67% (N=16) identified as White (neither Hispanic nor Latino/a), 16.67% (N = 4) identified as Black or African American, 12.5% (N=3) identified as

Hispanic or Latinx, and 4.17% (N=1) identified as having Two or more racial/ethnic identities.



When asked about their affiliation to the program, only 23 respondents reported their affiliation while 2 did not respond, thus the following data reflect answers from the 23 respondents. *Chart 3: Affiliation* shown below illustrates that most of the respondents (65.21%; N = 15) were students and 17.39% (N = 4) were faculty. Respondents also identified as either someone with a disability, a VR Representative/Counselor, Member of the Advisory Board, Staff, or Other who made up the remainder of the sample. In viewing the information in *Chart 3: Affiliation*, it is important to note that respondents were permitted to select more than one category of affiliation. For this reason, the sum total of responses in certain categories is higher due to multiple responses. In all, six participants reported affiliations with more than one category.

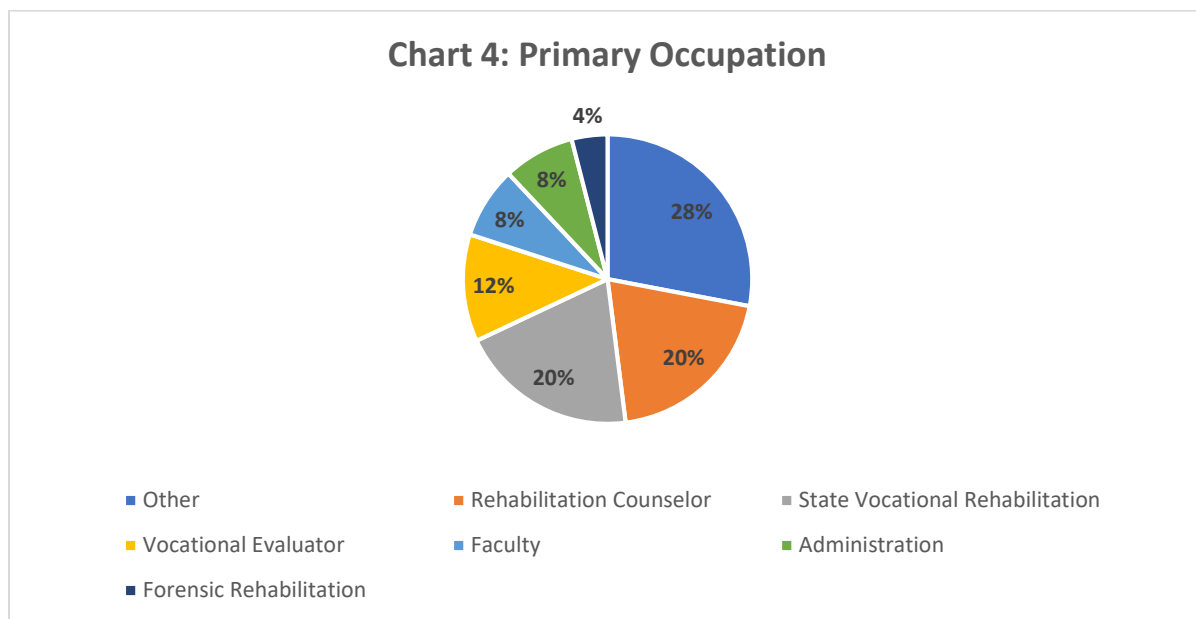


To identify primary occupation, participants were able to choose from the following:

- Faculty
- Administration
- Rehabilitation Counselor
- Lawyer/Judge
- Forensic Rehabilitation
- State Vocational Rehabilitation
- Vocational Evaluator
- Other

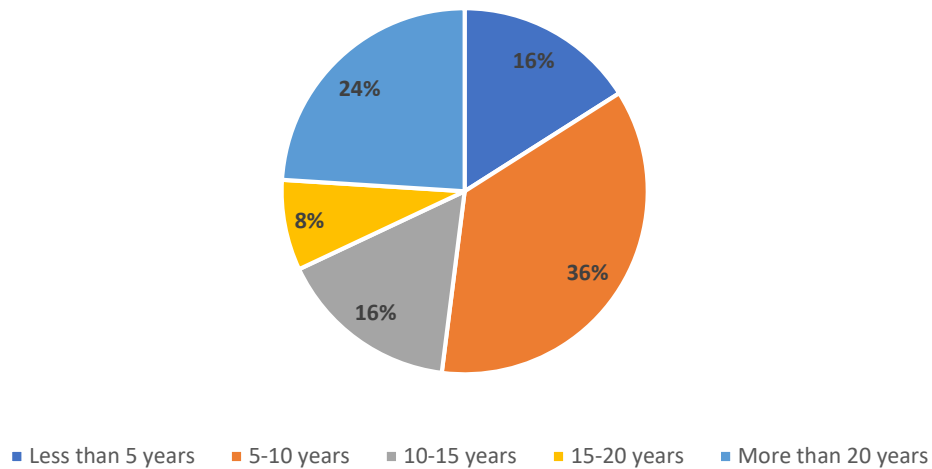
Each of the participants responded to this demographic question. On this section, participants could only choose one response. *Chart 4: Primary Occupation* shown below illustrates that the majority of respondents chose “Other” (28%; N = 7). The second largest responses indicated

“Rehabilitation Counselor” (20%; N = 5) and “State Vocational Rehabilitation” (20%; N = 5) for primary occupation. Thirdly, “Vocational Evaluator” (12%; N = 3) was a primary response for this section. Other responses included “Faculty” (8%; N = 2), “Administration” (8%, N = 2), and “Forensic Rehabilitation” (4%; N = 1).



Participants were able to indicate the number of years of experience in their occupation. The choices available for this section included “Less than 5 years”, “5-10 years”, “10-15 years”, “15-20 years”, and “More than 20 years”. Participants could only choose one response. *Chart 5: Years of Experience* displays the participant’s responses. Most of the participants indicated “5-10 years” of experience (36%; N = 9) and “More than 20 years” (24%; N = 6). Other responses included “Less than 5 years” (16%; N = 4), “10-15 years” (16%; N = 4), and “15-20 years” (8%, N = 2).

Chart 5: Years of Experience



Findings: Project Areas

To facilitate the evaluation process, project objectives and performance measures were divided into the following 6 areas:

1. High-tech Experience with Updated Curriculum
2. Student Recruitment
3. Student Access
4. Advisory Board
5. Implementation
6. Program Related Outcomes

Participants were asked a series of questions related to each of the program areas and provided responses using a 5-point Likert-type scale, including the following response choices: 1 – Very Inefficient; 2 – Inefficient; 3 – Neither Efficient nor Inefficient; 4 – Efficient; and 5 – Very Efficient. It is important to note that program areas or career-related outcomes after

completion of the training certificate are not included given that this data is not yet available, and thus these program areas only represent the areas that are applicable to the covered period of October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021 (Year 1). This was a planning year for the program. Student outcomes will be provided in the next I&O Survey, which will cover year 2. All 25 respondents completed each question regarding the following program areas.

1. High-tech Experience with Updated Curriculum

The High-tech Experience with Updated Curriculum program area included three questions pertaining to the goals of refining curriculum content and coursework for the VEFC, creating a new online instructional platform, and creating an accessible website specific to the VEFC.

Refinement of curriculum content and coursework: According to the survey, 72% of respondents (N=18) reported that the curriculum content and coursework decisions were “very efficient,” while 24% (N=6) reported as “efficient,” and 4% (N=1) reported as “inefficient.” The mean score of this program goal was 4.64 (SD=0.7).

Creation of new online instructional platform: Sixty percent (N=15) reported “very efficient” for the creation of a new online instructional platform, while 36% (N=9) reported “efficient,” and 4% (N=1) reported “neither inefficient nor efficient.” The mean score of the new instructional platform was 4.58 (SD=0.58).

Creation of an accessible website: In regard to creating a program website for the VEFC, 56% of respondents (N=14) reported the accessibility of the website as “very efficient,” in addition to 36% (N=9) who reported “efficient,” 4% (N=1) as “neither inefficient more

efficient,” and 4% (N=1) as “inefficient.” The mean score of the effectiveness of the accessibility of the website was 4.44 (SD=0.77).

2. Student Recruitment

The Student Recruitment program area consisted of three questions pertaining to awarding RSA scholarships to program applicants, recruiting and giving priority placement to those with minority identities from traditionally underrepresented groups, and/or those with a disability, and lastly, assisting applicants with the admissions process.

Award 15 RSA scholarships to VEFC program applicants: According to the survey, 84% of respondents (N=21) reported “very efficient” for awarding the 15 scholarships while 16% (N=4) reported “efficient.” The mean score was 4.84 (SD=0.37).

Recruit and give priority placement to individuals with minority identities from traditionally underrepresented groups, including individuals with disabilities: Sixty percent (60%; N=15) reported this area of recruitment as “very efficient” while 20% (N=5) reported “efficient,” 16% (N=4) reported “neither inefficient nor efficient,” and 4% (N=1) reported “inefficient.” The mean for minority recruitment was 4.38 (SD=0.91).

Assist applicants with the admissions process: Sixty percent (60%; N=15) reported the goal of assisting applicants with the admissions process as “very efficient,” while 36% (N=9) reported “efficient” and 4% (N=1) reported “inefficient.” The mean for assistance with the admission process was 4.56 (SD=0.58).

3. Student Access

The Student Access program area contains four questions that pertain to providing two educational formats (on campus and distance education), enrolling students who currently work in State VR agencies, providing the VEFC website and other online campus resources to enrolled students by the fall semester, and providing the fall courses (Introduction to Rehabilitation and Case Management and Proprietary Rehabilitation) during the first the fall semester of the program.

Provide two educational formats: The goal of providing the on-campus and distance education formats was rated as “very efficient” by 72% (N=18) of respondents. Twenty-four percent (24%; N=6) reported it as “efficient” and 4% (N=1) reported it as “inefficient.” The mean score for providing two educational formats was 4.60 (SD=0.87).

Enroll students currently working in State VR agencies: According to the survey, 60% (N=15) reported enrolling students who work in State VR as “very efficient,” while 32% (N=8) reported it as “efficient,” 4% (N=1) as “neither inefficient nor efficient,” and 4% (N=1) as “inefficient.” The mean score was 4.48 (SD=0.77).

Provide the VEFC website and online resources by the fall semester: Sixty-four percent (64%; N=16) reported providing the website and other online resources by the fall semester as “very efficient.” Another 28% (N=7) reported it as “efficient” and 8% (N=2) reported it as “neither inefficient nor efficient.” The mean score for providing these resources by the fall semester was 4.56 (SD=0.65).

Provide fall courses by the fall semester: Eighty-four percent (84%; N=21) reported this program goal as “very efficient,” while 12% (N=2) reported it as “efficient” and 4% (N=1)

reported is as “neither efficient nor inefficient.” The mean score for the effectiveness of providing the fall courses by the fall semester was 4.80 (SD=0.5).

4. Advisory Board

The program area related to the advisory board consisted of only one question at this time, which asked about the effectiveness of the VEFC in recruiting Advisory Board members from Region IV and various other states.

Recruit Advisory Board Members from Region IV and other states: According to the survey, 48% (N=12) reported this program area as “very efficient.” Another 36% (N=9) reported it as “efficient,” while another 16% (N=4) reported it as “neither inefficient nor efficient.” The mean score for the effectiveness of recruiting for the advisory board was 4.32 (SD=0.75).

5. Implementation

At this time, only one question related to the program area of implementation was included in this survey, which asked about completing the Implementation & Outcomes Survey (the current survey) on time.

Conduct a program I & O survey for year 1: The result indicated that 72% of respondents (N=18) gave the rating of “very efficient” while 24% (N=6) gave the rating of “efficient” and 4% (N=1) gave the rating of “inefficient.” The mean score for this program goal was 4.64 (SD=0.70).

6. Program Related Outcomes

Regarding program related outcomes, three questions were included in this survey. The questions were related to completing the quarterly reports and submitting them to the

RSA on time, submitting presentation proposals to professional conferences, and using cutting-edge technology and software.

Complete all quarterly reports to the RSA on time: This goal was reported to be “very efficient” by 68% of respondents (N=17), “efficient” by 24% (N=6), and “neither inefficient nor efficient” by 8% (N=2). The mean score of completing and submitting the quarterly reports on time was 4.60 (SD=0.65).

Submit presentation proposals to professional conferences: Seventy-two percent (72%; N=18) reported this goal as being “very efficient,” while 16% (N=4) reported “efficient,” 8% (N=2) reported “neither inefficient nor efficient,” and 4% (N=1) reported “inefficient.” The mean score of submitting presentation proposals was 4.56 (SD=0.82).

Use cutting-edge technology and software: The results indicated that 68% of respondents (N=17) reported it as “very efficient.” Twenty-four percent (24%; N=6) reported it as “efficient,” and 8% (N=2) reported it as “neither inefficient nor efficient.” The mean score for the program area and goal of using updated technology was 4.60 (SD=0.65).

Findings: Qualitative Responses

Survey participants were given the opportunity to add additional thoughts and observations. The prompt was “Please provide any additional comments or feedback regarding the efficiency of the aforementioned areas or other suggestions for improvement.”

Below is a list of responses from various participants.

- *“I was chosen for the scholarship (white), but my colleague (black) was not chosen.”*
- *“The program is very heavy in Alabama law. I work in [another state] so I am not sure how applicable some of the info regarding [Worker’s Compensation] is for my career.”*
- *“The ability to reach more students utilizing the distance education platform is amazing!”*

Summary and Recommendations

The purpose of the present survey was to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the Vocational Evaluation Forensic Certificate’s seven current program areas. By listing the program goals that pertained to year 1 of the program (Oct 1, 2020 to Sept 30, 2021), students, faculty, Adviosry Board Members, and other stakeholders were asked to rate the efficiency in meeting each of the goals within the given time frame. A total of 25 stakeholders completed the survey which resulted in about a 56% response rate. Additionally, there was an opportunity for respondents to provide feedback, thoughts, and other observations at the end of the survey.

The participants reported to be mostly female (91.67%, N = 22)(male 8.33%, N = 2). In terms of race or ethnicity, 66.67% (N=16) of respondents identified as White (neither Hispanic nor Latino/a), 16.67% (N = 4) identified as Black or African American, 12.5% (N=3) identified as Hispanic or Latinx, and 4.17% (N=1) identified as having two or more racial/ethnic identities. Lastly, most of the respondents (65.21%; N = 15) were students and 17.39% (N = 4) were faculty, while 6 participants selected affiliations in more than one category, (e.g., someone with a disability, currently working in State VR, staff, advisory board member, or other).

Overall, the year 1 I & O survey results ranged from “inefficient” to “very efficient,” with the majority of responses at the “very efficient” rating. There seemed to be a consistent single individual who answered “inefficient” for many of the questions, which may have skewed the results due to response bias or clerical error, or common to survey research, accidental reversal of the scale. Altogether, most of those involved with the VEFC reported the program areas and goals to be efficient, as evidenced by mean scores of 4.32 or above (based on a 5-point scale) on all items in each of the seven program areas.

Although the results suggest positive impact and efficiency, we believe that there are still many changes that can be made to improve the VEFC and its efficiency and effectiveness in meeting the grant’s purpose and objectives. Based on these results and the general knowledge of the program in its current state, we propose the following recommendations:

1. Student Recruitment and Enrollment:

- a. Enrollment: We are actively looking into areas of expansion for the VEFC within the department and as such hope to continue with cohorts of 15+ students each year. We believe that the flexibility of the two educational formats is an attractive characteristic of the program, as well as the 15 RSA scholarships that are awarded each year. A goal for years 2 and 3 would be to recruit all 15 scholars as well as a number of other students who enroll in the training certificate.
- b. Recruiting minority students: While we have a fairly diverse first cohort in both race, ethnicity, age, and ability status, we aim to increase the number of individuals with a minority identity enrolled in the program and awarded a scholarship. We hope to

expand on relationships with local HBCU's in the state of Alabama, as well as recruit from other organizations and academic institutions outside of the local area. To do this, we plan to coordinate informational zoom meetings with related university programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels so that they will have the opportunity to hear about the VEFC and ask questions. The goal is to increase the exposure of the program to minority students and begin building relationships with their educational programs.

2. Continue Recruitment of the Advisory Board

- a. While we have a number of Members that have agreed to serve on the advisory board, we are still actively recruiting a few more State VR counselors within Region IV, which will likely influence the rating of this program goal having the lowest mean score of 4.32 (SD=0.75). We believe that the difficulty in finding Members is in part due to the general sense of burnout among helping professionals within the COVID-19 era, as well as the program being new and still making a name for itself. Our goal of finding consultants to complete the Advisory Board will be revised and methods of recruitment will be improved. To date there is only one state in Region IV that does not have a State VR Representative, which is Mississippi. We will continue to explore ways to secure an Advisory Board Member from this state.