Stephen Leierer, PhD, is an Associate Professor and Director of Doctoral Studies in the Department of Addictions and Rehabilitation Studies. His PhD from Florida State University, and was employed by LSU and University of Memphis prior to joining the faculty at ECU. Dr. Leierer is working primarily in the doctoral program in Rehabilitation Counseling and Administration. His research includes the Strong Interest Inventory, counselor clinical judgments, disability identity, and college career course interventions. Dr. Leierer has published numerous collaborative papers in peer-reviewed journals and has served as Co-Investigator on grants funded by government agencies or private foundations. He also has expertise in research design and statistical analyses for data from surveys, focus groups, and archival data. Early in his career, before pursuing his PhD, Dr. Leierer worked as a Peace Corps volunteer at the National Teachers College of Honduras.

What do you like best about working at ECU?

Working on research projects with people from other disciplines. For example, Dr. Stacy Warner and I observed that adolescent sport program participants experienced significant increases related to Reinforcement of Needs, Membership, Influence, and Shared Emotional Connections. Our study helps to create the foundation for better understanding of how sport can help build a sense of community for adolescents.

In addition, I have also enjoyed serving on the Dissertation and Thesis Awards Committee because I have been able to read and analyze dissertation and thesis from various departments and disciplines. Thus, by participating on this committee has helped me connect with some of the research projects being conducted at ECU.

What do you find most exciting about your research and its potential?

When individuals seek career counseling or are about to embark on a professional program of study, they are in a subjective state of we call the Career Decision State. Unfortunately, often people cannot explain the thinking patterns creating this state. With the six-item Career Decision State Survey (CDSS), researchers and counselors can rapidly assess an individual’s negative career thinking in a wide variety of situations, such as student orientation, on-going career advising, and research projects. The goal of our research is to streamline the assessment of the Career Decision State so the career decision-making process becomes more effective and efficient.

What excites you about teaching?

I enjoy sharing various theories and ideas with my students. By providing opportunities for students to consider their unique interests, skills, and values, I hope the students can gain clarity about their strength and future opportunities to bring positive change into the world.

What do you hope students take away from their experiences from working with you on your research?

As a mentor, I attempt encourage my students to grow as individuals and scholars rather than attempt to fit them into a preconceived mold. I strive to respect students’ opinions and
help them find their voices in the academic community. Although I have a somewhat relatively unstructured approach to mentoring students, I am deeply committed to helping students to develop as independent, researchers, and scholars.

**What is your favorite teaching or research moment?**

In the winter of 2003, I developed a sabbatical-study semester in Chicago to improve my SPSS skills. For approximately 10 weeks for 6-7 hours each day, I attended SPSS workshops on various statistics procedures. What a wonderful experience. Not only did I learn about the various statistical procedures need to answer various research questions but I also learned about how to run these analyses using the SPSS. The sabbatical provided a wonderful opportunity to hone my skills as a researcher and SPSS-user.