

Sara Merschen, DSL

Assistant Professor

Regent University

EDUCATION

2021-2025 DSL., Strategic Leadership, Regent University
2012-2014 M.A., Economics, Virginia Commonwealth University
2008-2012 B.S., Economics, Longwood University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Regent University | Virginia Beach, VA | July 2024 – Present

Assistant Program Director & Assistant Professor | May 2026 – Present

- Provide academic and operational leadership for the Counseling Ministries doctoral program, overseeing curriculum implementation, student progression, faculty coordination, and program policies to support academic quality and institutional objectives.
- Advise and mentor doctoral students throughout academic progression, dissertation development, and degree completion, navigating complex academic situations and developing individualized pathways toward program milestones.
- Assist in developing and implementing student retention and intervention strategies using academic data, progression trends, and proactive outreach to identify barriers and support timely degree completion.
- Design and teach doctoral coursework in leadership and professional development, integrating evidence-based pedagogy, applied learning, critical thinking, and emerging technologies.
- Lead program-level initiatives involving artificial intelligence, instructional innovation, and emerging educational technologies, developing approaches that balance innovation, academic integrity, ethical practice, and student learning.
- Support accreditation and continuous improvement efforts through faculty credentialing, curriculum review, documentation, data analysis, and evaluation of program alignment with institutional and accreditation standards.

Adjunct Professor | May 2025 – May 2026

- Facilitated live and asynchronous instruction that incorporates reflective learning, emotional awareness, and dialectical thinking to enhance student engagement.
- Provided academic coaching grounded in acceptance and change principles, supporting diverse and at-risk learners in improving progression and course outcomes.
- Mentored doctoral students in research and writing while fostering creativity, flexibility, resilience, and critical thinking skills.
- Maintained proactive outreach strategies that promoted consistent engagement, accountability, and student retention.

Graduate Assistant | July 2024 – May 2025

- Supported graduate-level courses by contributing to student-centered instructional design that emphasizes clarity, structure, and skill development.
- Led revisions of course materials to incorporate engagement strategies and applied learning techniques, improving accessibility and student comprehension.
- Utilized LMS and academic systems to track student progress and support early identification and intervention for at-risk learners.

- Collaborated with faculty to enhance learning environments that balance support with academic rigor, reinforcing both growth and accountability.

ECPI University | Virginia Beach, VA | Adjunct Professor | September 2025 – May 2025

- Delivered structured, career-focused instruction while integrating skills-based learning approaches that promote problem-solving and real-world application.
- Provided individualized coaching using DBT-informed strategies supporting student engagement and academic success.
- Maintained a strong LMS presence through consistent communication, reinforcing clarity, accountability, and feedback loops.
- Identified at-risk learners early and implemented proactive interventions to equip students to navigate challenges before they escalate.

Allstate Insurance Company | Chicago, IL (HBR) | March 2022 – June 2024

Talent Management Manager | April 2024 – June 2024

- Designed and evaluated professional development programs using participation metrics and engagement data, supporting 320+ employees and achieving a 95% participation rate.
- Conducted employee engagement analysis through survey data and feedback tools, informing the redesign of recognition initiatives that increased engagement by 30%.
- Developed and implemented knowledge-sharing platforms, assessing impact through participation trends and qualitative feedback to enhance organizational learning and collaboration.
- Applied data-informed decision-making and program evaluation methods to continuously refine development initiatives, incorporating skills and behavior-informed strategies to strengthen engagement and cross-departmental collaboration.

VP of Allstate Professionals Organization | January 2024 – June 2024

**This was 25% TDY served in conjunction with current work efforts to increase professional development*

- Partnered with senior HR leaders to conduct needs assessments using qualitative and quantitative data to identify talent development gaps and inform evidence-based learning strategies.
- Designed and evaluated large-scale development programs serving 300+ synchronous and 5,000+ asynchronous participants, utilizing participation metrics and outcome analysis to guide continuous improvement.
- Developed and administered employee engagement surveys and feedback instruments, analyzing results to identify trends and inform organizational development initiatives.
- Applied data-driven evaluation methods to assess program effectiveness and strengthen employee engagement and professional development outcomes.

Data Scientist Manager | March 2022 – April 2024

- Designed and executed data-driven research and evaluation frameworks to assess operational performance, contributing to initiatives generating \$10M+ in annual impact.
- Facilitated organizational assessments synthesizing qualitative and quantitative data to inform strategic recommendations and future-state planning.
- Conducted change readiness and stakeholder analyses across multiple projects, using structured evaluation methods to achieve an 85% adoption rate, while incorporating principles of acceptance and change to support stakeholder alignment.
- Applied statistical analysis and performance measurement techniques to monitor project outcomes and inform decision-making.

- Led cross-functional teams in translating analytical findings into actionable, evidence-based strategies, increasing cross-team project partnerships by 20%.

CKS Financial | Chesapeake, VA | Director of Data Management | July 2017– March 2022

- Led and managed a multidisciplinary team of data scientists and analysts, overseeing the development, implementation, and evaluation of machine learning and artificial intelligence models, algorithms, and analytical processes to support organizational decision-making and strategic objectives.
- Designed and facilitated organizational assessments and discovery sessions, incorporating qualitative data collection methods to inform strategic planning initiatives.
- Developed data governance frameworks and evaluation protocols to ensure compliance and consistency across organizational processes.
- Built long-term strategic roadmaps informed by trend analysis, forecasting, and data modeling techniques.
- Collaborated with cross-functional teams to implement data-driven solutions, evaluating outcomes to improve operational efficiency and effectiveness while promoting structured problem-solving and adaptive decision-making.

PRA Group | Norfolk, VA | Statistical Analyst II | June 2014 – July 2017

- Conducted quantitative analyses and predictive modeling, applying statistical methods to support organizational strategy and decision-making.
- Designed and implemented analytical models to identify trends, assess risk, and evaluate performance outcomes.
- Translated complex statistical findings into interpretable insights, supporting evidence-based decisions by senior leadership.
- Presented data-driven recommendations grounded in rigorous analytical methodology.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

2026-present American Psychological Association, Supporter

2026-present Association for Advancement of Artificial Intelligence, Member