GREETINGS FROM THE EDITORS

Hello and Happy Spring, School Psychology Students and Alumni!

We hope that everyone’s spring is off to a great start. Zari and I are soaking up this warmer weather and sunshine! Now that “March Madness” has ended, we hope that you will take some much deserved time for yourselves. Keep reading if you need some self-care inspiration!

This newsletter will also bring you exclusive interviews from alumni, important program information, upcoming events, and a message from Dr. Mortenson.

Thank you to everyone who contributed, and please never hesitate to stop by and say hello at LA 1101!

Best,
Taylor Fowler and Zari Press

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Alumni Spotlight

Amy Jagoda

Professionally speaking, how did you get where you are today?

I had initially thought I would become a teacher like my mother and sister but I became interested in psychology as an undergrad at UMBC. Once I figured that out, the question became, “What can I do with a psychology degree?” My mother was an elementary school principal in Howard County at this time and she suggested I shadow her school psychologist. I did that and discovered that school psychology was the perfect field for me. I applied to Towson’s school psychology program, interviewed, and was accepted into the cohort that year. I did my practicum in Baltimore County and my internship in Carroll County. I fell in love with Carroll County and worked as a school psychologist for the past fourteen years.

With the passing of the Safe to Learn Act, school districts were required to assign a mental health coordinator responsible for ensuring students receive mental health supports related to the Safe to Learn Act. Most districts identified a coordinator who already had another position (e.g., Supervisor of School Psychologists, Supervisor of School Counseling). Carroll County was one of the few districts who saw the importance of making the mental health coordinator a dedicated position. I interviewed and was hired this fall as the Coordinator of Mental Health and Student Services for Carroll County Public Schools.

What makes the Towson School Psychology Program special?

Towson’s School Psychology Program is special for its connectedness to the various districts in Maryland. Not all school systems are the same. The needs vary greatly across the state and Towson prepares its graduate students to be successful no matter where they end up working. The professors know the supervisors in each district well and work with them to ensure the graduate students are getting an excellent experience in practicum and internship as well as ensuring the district’s expectations are met in the work of the graduate student.

Do you have any advice or wise words for people just entering the field of School Psychology?

School Psychology is an exciting and much needed field. Our students, families, and staff had significant needs that we are trained to address. As a school psychologist, you are able to facilitate and see positive change at the student, classroom, school, district, state, and even national level. Find what you love in the field and develop everything you can in that area.

What are you favorite aspects of being a school psychologist?

I love that every day is different and we spend our time solving problems creatively to help children and their families at the school level. I am very fortunate to work in a county that allows for that creativity and actively encourages it. One such example was the creation of the Social Understanding and Relationship Fundamentals (SURF) summer program. This was born from the need of a student with Autism to work on social skills over the summer with peer models. Extended School Year (ESY) services target identified IEP goals and objectives with the special education student but peer models are not included in that instruction. A colleague and I with the support of our principal, created a program to not only help the students with Autism but help at-risk students at the same time who were social role models. Those students receive leadership instruction while supporting the students with Autism in developing social skills in a camp like setting. SURF provides structure, free meals, free transportation, and access to counseling support as needed.

How has your training at Towson prepared you for your position?

My training was very focused on data based decision-making, consultation, intervention, and assessment. In my current role as the Coordinator of Mental Health and Student Services, I am able to solve problems creatively at the system level. The Safe to Learn Act requires that by September 1, 2019 each local school system must adopt a policy for the establishment of assessment teams that is consistent with the model policy. My training in assessment has helped in supporting the development of our Threat Management Team as well as our threat/violence assessment process. My consultation skills are critical in developing community partnerships including community agencies, hospitals, private service providers, and families. My training in intervention is needed to link students to the appropriate behavioral and mental health interventions that will best meet their needs. Finally, my skills in data collection and interpretation are required to ensure the decisions we make as a district are purposeful and linked to data which supports it.

Do you have any advice or wise words for students starting the School Psychology Program at Towson?

Get involved with the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association (MSPA). Become a student member so that you get special reduced rates at conferences, access to past conference materials on the website www.msponline.org, and get involved at the board level. We are seeking student engagement on the board. Join a committee of interest (e.g., legislative, public affairs, program, strategic planning, information management, newsletter, nominations). The commitment varies depending on what you are interested in and how much time you want to commit. Committees will identify specific tasks they need support with which will give you a nice way to try out a few things and find the committee you like the best. It is also a great way to network with school psychologists and supervisors across the state. It affords you the opportunity to ask questions about different districts and to learn about the latest and greatest school psychology news in Maryland.
Alumni Spotlight

Jim Lawson

Professionally speaking, how did you get where you are today?

I was a psychology major as an undergraduate and, like many other psychology majors, found myself confused about what career path to take post-college. After initially considering a career in law, I decided to pursue school psychology based on my interest in related undergrad coursework, like child psychopathology and psychological tests and measurements. That decision led me to Towson’s school psychology program. Upon graduating from Towson, I began my career in Baltimore County, where I spent three formative years learning from supervisors and veteran school psychologists. I then transitioned to Carroll County, where I have worked for the last three years. Toward the end of the 17-18 school year, I was fortunate enough to receive a promotion to a 12-month position, which is associated with my current assignment in the county’s elementary, middle, and high school BEST programs. The BEST programs are regional special education programs for students with significant emotional and behavioral disabilities. My current role is more clinical in nature than my previous school psychologist roles, and it allows me to spend a large portion of my day in direction intervention with students. My position also allows me to continue to support students in the BEST programs over the summer through CCPS’s PRIDE and SURF camps. In addition to my work with the BEST programs, I have increasingly taken on leadership and system level roles over the last few years in CCPS, including leading county-wide initiatives, conducting ongoing professional development for elementary support staff, assisting with crafting new Student Services policy, leading our staff technology committee, training newly hired school psychologists, and supervising school psychology interns.

What are you favorite aspects of being a school psychologist?

One of my favorite aspects of being a school psychologist is the investigative nature of the job. When a student is struggling academically or behaviorally, I enjoy using my different investigative tools to find out why. It is like detective work. It can be so satisfying to crack the case, arrange for the appropriate targeted supports, and monitor the student’s growth moving forward. Another favorite aspect I have realized more recently is observing the impact of students from my high school program on elementary students during the PRIDE and SURF summer camps. It is incredibly powerful to see the effect an older student can have on a younger student, especially when the older student has been through similar emotional or behavioral challenges as the younger student. On many occasions, that impact can be even more profound than any impact made by an adult in the student’s life.

How has your training at Towson prepared you for your position?

While all school psychologists engage in data-based decision making, I believe school psychologists trained at Towson are best positioned to use data in meaningful and creative ways to support students. Schools are stressful places and, at times, school professionals are stretched so thin that they fall victim to making decisions based on whatever event has happened most recently. School psychologists trained at Towson understand how to take a step back, look at data over the course of time, monitor trends, and use sound methods to determine if an intervention is effective or if a change in course is needed. My training at Towson also taught me how to communicate and collaborate as a member of a team. A school psychologist’s ability to communicate effectively with other team members is every bit as important as clinical knowledge and skill in the school setting.

Do you have any advice or wise words for students starting the School Psychology Program at Towson?

Use these next three years to acquire as many diverse experiences as possible while you are still in a supportive learning atmosphere. If an aspect of the school psychologist job intimidates you, seek out opportunities to learn more about that aspect and then obtain direct experience. Your practicum and internship are perfect times to seek out anxiety-provoking learning opportunities while you remain closely connected to professors and practicum/intern supervisors from whom you can seek guidance. It can be tempting to seek out experiences in areas in which you already feel comfortable but, in the long run, you will wind up less prepared to tackle the many challenges thrown at you daily on the job. Trust your training, be willing to take risks, and realize the world does not end when you encounter a setback. Additionally, consider joining the Maryland School Psychologists’ Association (MSPA) while at Towson. Through MSPA conferences, board meetings, or work on a committee, you will be sure to establish new networking contacts, learn more about current issues affecting the field, and acquire knowledge about different counties across the state.
Wise Words from the Program Director

Good Spring Afternoon All!

I have had this one phrase running around in my head and it doesn’t sound very spring-like. It is by Ernest Hemingway: *The world breaks everyone and some are strong at the broken place.* Perhaps if we look to the calendar for clues, Hemingway’s missive comes into focus. At present, internships are being finalized or sought, we are at the eve of the comprehensive examination and the first reports from Psych 720 are being returned with tender bits of feedback and encouragement.

Stronger in the broken places is the part that I get stuck on. Is it true? That when met with adversity, unkind feedback or the like, do we remain present (stronger) and resist the urge to slide under the covers with a pound of dark chocolate nonpareils? Given the longevity or staying power that our current and former students have shown, Hemingway’s assertion is correct. We are broken at times. But because of what we do and why we do it, we are stronger and more resilient. And part of our role is to share that message of support and hope with others. Hemingway had issues. Another writer, R. M. Drake, offers the following: *and she always had a way with her brokenness. She would take her pieces and make them beautiful.*

No matter your standing in the program or your station post-program, be stronger in those places and make them beautiful.

Dr. Mortenson
UPCOMING EVENTS

NASP & MSPA

Registration is open for NASP's summer conferences!

Check out https://www.nasponline.org/professional-development & http://www.mspaonline.org/Conferences for more information!

If you are a current TU student, the Graduate Student Association offers travel awards for students attending events related to their graduate program. Instructions on how to apply below!

https://www.towson.edu/academics/graduate/gsa/documents/travel-award.pdf

Our program is in need of new student representatives for MSPA & NASP! We’re talking to you, first and second years! This looks great on a resume, gives you discounts on conferences, and more! Talk to Dr. Mortenson for more information.

2019 Summer Institute

Tuesday, Wednesday, & Thursday
June 18, 19, & 20, 2019

Personality Problems in Youth and Adolescence; Theory, Research, & Intervention

Dr. Carla Sharp, Ph.D.
Professor and Director of Training for the Clinical Psychology doctoral program at the University of Houston; Adjunct Professor Positions at University of Texas, Baylor College of Medicine, University College London and the University of the Free State in South Africa; Researcher and Published Author

NASP’s Presentation Proposals System
Opens May 1, 2019.
The NASP 2020 Annual Convention will take place February 18–21, 2020, in Baltimore, MD!
Summer Schedule

2nd Years:
- Interventions in School Settings
  Mon./Wed. 9:30-12:30
- Ethical, Legal, And Professional Issues
  Tue./Thurs. 12:30-4:30

1st Years:
- Exceptional Child
  Mon. 12-2:40
- Experimental Psyc.
  Tues. 12-2:40
- Role of the School Psyc.
  Wed. 10-12:40
- Developmental Psyc.
  Thurs. 10-12:40

Fall Schedules

2nd Years:
- Psychotherapy
  Mon. 4:20-6:50
  Preschool Assessment
  Tues. 4:20-6:50
  School-Based Consultation
  Wed. 4:20-6:50
  Practicum Sessions 1 & 2
  Fri. 9-11:40/12-2:40

Interns:
- Internship
  Wed. 4:20-6:50
  (every other week)

Spring/Summer

GA Office Hours

Spring:
- Monday 9-4
- Tuesday 9-3
- Wednesday 10-12, 3-6
- Thursday 3-6

Summer:
- Available by appointment!
zpress1@students.towson.edu

Test Library Hours

Monday: 11-4
Tuesday 10-5
Wednesday: 10-12, 2:45-4:45
Thursday: 10-12, 2:45-4:45
Friday: By appt.
IF YOU HAVEN’T LIKED US ON FACEBOOK YET...

Here’s what you’ve missed!

Several of our first and second years had a blast at the 2019 NASP conference in Atlanta! (And even got to meet Dr. Richard Woodcock!)

Second Years shared their behavioral consultation results with first years (above) and discussed *Who Moved My Cheese* over snacks and presents (below).

During School Psychology Awareness Week, first and second years joined together to inform passersby about our field and hand out delicious cookies! (Left)

Our second years are so excited for internship!