Special Thanks

- Dr. John Mehm, Director
- Daveon McMullen
- Sonia Altavilla
- Isra Yaghoubi
- Lori McEachern

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END OF THE YEAR PARTY

Tuesday, June 7th
6:30-9:00pm
Elaine’s Restaurant
Wethersfield, CT
Message from the Director

John G. Mehm, PhD

We wish all the best in their transition from one phase of their career in psychology to the next.

Congratulations to all on completing what is one of the busiest spring semesters in recent memory! We survived a cold and snowy winter, with even a touch of snow in early April. We’ve been teased with some warm, sunny weather and look forward to summer arriving for good in the near future. This time of year is always one of transitions, and we wish the best to everyone who is moving from one phase of their career in psychology to the next. Especially for the students whom we will be honoring at our annual party in June, we thank you for making the doctoral program a place of energy and vitality.

I wish to congratulate everyone on the success of our internship applicants this year. As noted elsewhere in this Newsletter, all 16 of this year’s applicants were successful in the 2016 APPIC internship match. This success reflects well on the program and our students, all of whom are appreciative of the support they received from faculty in assisting them with their applications this year. Our own program’s success is complemented by good news around the country, with a smaller internship imbalance than we have seen in many years. The recent efforts of APA to allocate funding to encourage the development and expansion of internship programs have begun to ameliorate a problem that has been around for 20 years.

A second area of success this spring has been our admissions process. Under the direction of Dr. Carlene Davidson, GIPP has had an excellent recruiting season for our Fall, 2016, entering class. With fewer offers of admission than usual, we have exceeded our target for the incoming class. We continue to expand the diversity of our student body, which will have a more diverse group of students taking classes than ever before. In addition to Dr. Davidson, her student assistants, Betty Viereck, Cindy Oppenheimer, and student volunteers, we are very appreciative of the work of Summer Amorosino and her staff in the graduate admissions office.

With the time and effort expended on faculty searches this year, it’s a great pleasure to look forward to two full-time faculty (Dr. Elizabeth Pienkos and Dr. Katie Crowell) joining the GIPP faculty this fall. The Department of Psychology will also be welcoming Dr. Jason Anastas, and we hope that his busy schedule would permit some involvement with the PsyD program as well.

I have enough meetings and workshops scheduled for the summer session that I’m confident I will see most of you in the coming weeks. Thanks for a great spring, and all the best for the summer!
2016 Internship Match Results

Congratulations to all GIPP students who matched in the 2016 APPIC Internship Match! We are very pleased that every applicant matched this year and will be planning to attend an internship program near or far. We wish you the best for a productive year!

American University Counseling Center (Washington DC)
Brooke Army Medical Center (Fort Sam Houston, TX)
Canandaigua VA Medical Center Neuropsychology Track (Canandaigua, NY)
Chestnut Hill College Internship Consortium (Philadelphia, PA)
Community Healthlink Youth & Family Services (Worcester, MA)
Hutchings Psychiatric Center Adult Track (Syracuse, NY)
Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital Adult Track (Hartford, CT)
Institute of Living/Hartford Hospital Child/Adolescent Track (Hartford, CT)
Missouri Health Sciences Psychology Consortium Adult Rehab/Neuropsychology Track (Columbia, SC)
Pilgrim Psychiatric Center (West Brentwood, NY)
SUNY Stony Brook Counseling Center (Stony Brook, NY)
Terry’s Children Center (New Castle, DE)
University of Maine Counseling Center (Orono, ME)
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Counseling Center (Chapel Hill, NC)
VA Central Western Massachusetts Healthcare System (Leeds, MA)
Yale University CMHC Adult Inpatient Services (New Haven, CT)

Summer 2016 Student Meetings

Please mark your calendars for the following meetings during the summer session:

Thursday, May 19, 12:00-1:00 PM: Meeting with 3rd and 4th year students.
Monday, May 23, 12:10-1:50 PM: Meeting with 1st year students.
Thursday, May 26, 12:00-1:50 PM: Internship preparation meeting #1.
Wednesday, June 1, 12:00-1:00 PM: Fall registration for 1st year students.
Thursday, June 2, 12:00-1:00 PM: Fall registration for 2nd year students.
Thursday, June 9, 12:00-1:00 PM: Internship preparation meeting #2.
Psychologists & Advocacy: Beyond The Therapy Room
Isra Yaghoubi, CPA Legislative Advocacy Fellow, 2015-2016

Maybe you’ve considered the social and economic realities that affect our clients outside of the therapy room? And maybe you’ve noticed the varying structures of mental health services at our training sites, or wondered about our professional realities post-graduation?

It turns out that psychologists can actually play a part in what happens at a larger level - for us professionally and for our clients - beyond the therapy room, if we choose to. The Connecticut Psychological Association (CPA) has a branch specifically dedicated to legislative advocacy, addressing some of these issues, and more.

Here are some issues and highlights of recent CPA Legislative work:

**Protecting Psychologists Scope of Practice** - CPA has worked with behavioral analysts to craft language for their licensure, which would not infringe on psychologist's scope of practice, while also opposing licensure of master's level psychologists, a bill that died in committee last year after CPA opposition and grass roots support.

**Insurance: Parity, Adequacy, Transparency, Accountability** - CPA has advocated for parity (the position that dollar limits on mental health benefits should not be lower than those for medical and surgical benefits), ensuring adequacy of provider networks, transparency in the claims and reimbursement process, and accountability of insurers related to grievances.

**Insurance Claims Denial Criteria (SB 372)** - One of the insurance bills in the legislature contains language that would allow insurers to establish their own internal clinical criteria for denial of claims, as opposed to basing denials on existing, evidence-based standards, as currently required by statute. CPA has opposed this language and has been in touch with legislators throughout the process.

**CPA State Breakfast** - hosted at the state Legislative Office Building on April 6th, CPA provided resources to legislators and staff, speaking with legislators about the CPA psychology technicians bill initiative, broad concerns related to insurance bills, and one specifically dealing with denial of claims.

**Federal Mental Health Legislation** - CPA advocated in D.C. at the APA 2016 State Leadership Conference in support of federal mental health legislation, which would increase access to care. CPA also communicated with CT Senator Chris Murphy’s Office regarding his work on bipartisan federal mental health legislation, shared support and expressed concerns about protecting privacy, and emphasized the need to include psychology in provisions related to grant funding for integrated care.
A Day in the Life of GIPP-Student Fathers
Sonia Altavilla, MA-University of Hartford

Being a parent is a job in itself - monitoring and promoting your child’s health, being a role model for them, and providing a safe and loving environment in which they can flourish. So being able to balance those responsibilities while striving to meet the requirements of a doctoral program is an incredible feat. Such is the life of the student fathers here at GIPP. After the article last fall on the experiences of student-mothers, I spoke with Henry Hippolyte (HH; 2nd year) and Nathan Grandpre (NG; 2nd year) to hear about the joys and challenges they face as fathers in the program.

What are some of the biggest challenges in being a graduate student and a father?
NG: “One of the hardest things for me now is figuring out if one of them gets sick, who has to stay home with them and take them to the doctor. With daycare right now it feels like illness just runs through the whole classroom, so you can see it coming. So navigating obstacles when the kids get sick, who has to take time off of work or practicum. But playing with a baby is a lot of fun, so there’s that, haha.”

HH: “My kids kind of get that I’m not around because they’re a little older than Nate’s kids, but they still want to talk and interact with me when I’m working. So trying to temper my frustration and not take things out on them is probably the hardest thing.”

What’s it like being a 2nd year in the program?
NG: “The whole quals thing [Qualifying Examinations] around the holidays was tough, because you had to balance family time with school work.”

HH: “Family time has really taken a major hit, working 7 days a week, every day there’s something. I usually can’t get to my work until 8-9pm after I’ve seen the kids.”

If you were not a father, how would your life be different?
NG: “I think having kids helps you put things into perspective. Like if you hand in something that wasn’t perfect, it helps you to rationalize and prioritize things. So if I didn’t have kids, I might overanalyze work and be a perfectionist. There is no time to be a perfectionist.”

HH: “I’ve never thought about it. I think I’d have more money in my pocket, that’s for sure. Because it’s a huge financial obligation to have children, but it’s been so much a part of my life that I can’t even imagine it. I don’t even know if I’d be in school because you do so many things to set an example for them.”
NG: “Yeah I agree with that, because I want my kids to know that they can change their career path and do whatever they set their mind to.”

HH: “One thing my dad told me was that he wanted me to be better than him, so I think I’ve internalized that and want that for my kids too, and want them to be better than me. MY goal is for them to be better than me and I want to set the bar high.

What resources/support have you had while in the program?

HH: “My mother-in-law has been very supportive, even before the program but even more so during. My brother might come down too if needed. I wouldn’t be able to do this program without family supports in some way.”

NG: “I agree with that, it’s mostly family that if something comes up, my parents or my wife’s mother come up.”

Were/Are professors, advisors, and/or supervisors understanding and supportive?

HH: “For the most part professors haven’t given me a hard time about it. Sometimes I have to leave class early or come late, and I haven’t had any issues. In the fall semester, I had a class with the same professor twice a week at the same time, and I had to leave class early both times. She was really understanding and didn’t give me a hard time about it at all.”

NG: “Everybody’s been good about it, I’ve missed a couple times because one of them had been sick. One of my professors has even said that we could bring our kids to class if we needed too, so they’ve been pretty flexible with regard to kids.”
What is one piece of advice or words of wisdom for students thinking about having children while in graduate school or for student parents already in GIPP?

HH: “I would say, it’s doable, you can do it. I would not hold off if it’s something that you really want. But just make sure you have a good support system because that’s really been the most important part. Because the program is tough, and parenting is tough - but it’s all doable.”

NG: “I think trying to change little things to make your life easier makes a big difference. So I moved to West Hartford and got daycare down the road to make sure that commuting wasn’t a hassle. Just figuring out ways to make life a little bit easier so you can take on the additional challenges in the program.”

Has being a father affected your clinical work?

NG: “I think I’ve stayed away from working with children. I think having them makes me want to work with adults. I want to enjoy my kids being children, and so if I always worked with kids I might start looking for issues all the time.”

HH: “I work with kids, always have, and I don’t think being a father impacts my work as a therapist. But maybe it does and I’m oblivious to it, haha. I don’t think about my kids in the session consciously. I try to keep them out, and keep more focus on research and training about parenting for clients who are parents. On the flip side, I’m not a therapist at home - I can scream and laugh and be a dad.”

Any additional comments for readers?

NG: “It’s a pretty rewarding experience. I think having kids really helps you, or at least it helps me, relax and not think about school all the time. It’s kind of a way to get away.”

HH: “That pretty much sums it up.”

I want to thank Henry and Nate for taking the time to meet with me and sharing their experiences for the GIPP community!
AWP-CT and the “Untold Story”

Lori McEachern, 3rd Year Doctoral Candidate

Maya Angelou wrote “There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you”. The act of storytelling can be a radical act, to name and share one’s experiences in the presence of others, who in turn bear witness and share their own. The stories of women, like all groups who face oppression, have been muted, twisted, and commodified, if not outright denied by the dominant narrative. Rooted in the pursuit of social justice and the dismantling of oppressive structures, the Association for Women in Psychology-CT, uses free and public forums to bring awareness to issues of injustice and to empower individuals to take action. The vital contribution of the lesbian community to the feminist movement, the experience and resources for survivors of sexual assault, as well as the experience of hunger and homelessness are all issues that AWP-CT has brought to the community through forums held in Spring and Fall. This Spring, AWP-CT took a different direction and opened the forum as a storytelling event for all feminists who had a story to share, whether it was their own origin story, their philosophy, or an enthusiasm for Nicki Minaj.

Too often, as graduate students, our vision becomes locked into a tunnel of the work that is immediately in front of us, the papers that are due, the notes to write, the books to read... and our lives become narrowed. AWP-CT is a professional organization centered in West Hartford and it offers an opportunity to expand your awareness, to engage deeply and genuinely in social change. We host the symposiums, we present at the national conference - but we offer more than that. You will be challenged, you will be engaged, and you will feel connected to a feminist community that will change you, personally and professionally. You will get a chance to do the work that we yen for in classroom discussions about injustice. I can’t think of an antidote more potent to that feeling of powerlessness than becoming an agent of change. AWP-CT offers that, and we are always open for new folks. There is a place for you in AWP-CT, we would love to see you there.

“..you don’t just make something to become famous or to be cool or to get stoned, you do it because it’s amazing. And it moves you. And it’s important. Then all of that other stuff is just a gift”.

l. gabrielle penabaz
I cannot begin to describe to you how much I enjoyed my practicum experience at UCONN this academic year. As someone who never thought that they would enjoy college counseling, this experience has totally changed my worldview. I loved working with college students who present with a variety of issues and concerns that really require you as a psychotherapist to be on your toes. In addition, I really appreciated the friendly and supportive environment among the staff at CMHS. It was enriching for me to be surrounded by professionals who were so knowledgeable, open, supportive, and invested in the process of therapeutic change and healing. With all of that being said, the absolute best part of my training experience was my supervision with Dr. Jenn Fox. The impact she has had on me is incomparable. Our conversations have challenged me, enlightened me, and have pushed forward in my development as a psychologist. I wanted to interview her so that people in my program could capture a glimpse of what I had the privilege to experience this year.

What is your role at UCONN CMHS and how long have you been there?

I first worked at CMHS in 1996 as a practicum student! I was then given an opportunity to complete my postdoc year at CMHS followed by an offer for a staff psychologist position, so I have been here for 20 years now. My role as a staff Psychologist primarily includes provision of clinical services (individual and group therapy, triage, on call services), training (seminars and weekly supervision with practicum students and interns) and outreach activities.

What's a typical work week like for you? (# of clients, paperwork time, outreach, meetings, supervision, case conference, etc.)

In a typical week I am spending about 60% of my time in clinical work (includes individual therapy, group therapy, triage, on call). I spend a few hours each week providing supervision and reviewing supervision tapes and notes. I have one hour each week for peer supervision in case conference. Time spent for staff meetings and outreach activities varies a lot across the semester.

What is/are your clinical specialty/expertise areas?

I prefer to work with a variety of presenting concerns and have actually tried to avoid perceptions or labels of specialty areas. In my past experience, being seen as an expert in one area tended to overload my caseload with those referrals, which came at the expense of having a more diverse caseload. That being said, I have given special attention to bereavement and have really enjoyed working with individuals and groups for bereavement support. I also really enjoy working with people who present with Axis II symptoms, and feel that one of my strengths, as a therapist is to successfully conceptualize and navigate these relationships in a manner that is restorative for the clients. My specialty area in outreach is in suicide prevention.

What do you enjoy most about working with college students and at a university counseling center?

I enjoy working with students for so many reasons, but it is particularly rewarding to work with people who developmentally are in such a dynamic and flexible stage of constructing their identities and their life direction. Working at this college counseling center is particularly positive experience for me because I have such a great group of trusted colleagues, and I very much feel like part of this college community in which there are so many opportunities to engage with the community in outreach and cultural events.
What are the challenges in working with college students and at a university counseling center?

During the semester it is difficult to accommodate the number of students who are seeking therapy and who are in need of support. Working at a campus in a rural area does create challenges when trying to refer a student for longer term therapy or higher levels of care. Also, the academic calendar does not always coincide with clinical progress, treatment plan and/or termination plans, so there are instances when therapy ends at a clinically unnatural time due to graduation or semester break.

How would you describe your theoretical orientation?

I was trained in CBT originally, but have come to rely most heavily on psychodynamic and interpersonal approaches. My intention is to use what fits best for each client, but I find the most meaning in the work when we are working through object relation narratives and transference-based interventions.

How would you describe your approach to multiculturalism and diversity issues in clinical work and in everyday life?

I approach diversity issues with an attitude of cultural humility. This has become a natural and ever present part of every discussion and facet of professional interactions with students and colleagues. I benefit from working with a group of colleagues who are actively seeking mindful and culturally informed approaches in our work. Cultural curiosity and humility is also something that I actively bring into conversations with my children and my community outside of Uconn.

What do you enjoy about being a supervisor?

I really enjoy the exploratory nature of supervision conversations, and feel it is a great privilege each year to bear witness to the learning and growth I see in supervisees. I love the “ah-hah” moments when supervisees make an important connection or come to a new understanding in conceptualization. I enjoy getting to know my supervisees and aspire to provide a supportive, sometimes humorous, and safe but challenging environment in which they can explore their growing identity as therapists. I also appreciate the wisdom and experience offered by my supervisees each year, and feel that I am continuing to learn through these shared experiences in supervision.

Are there any lessons or gold nuggets that you really try to relay to your supervisees/students?

I hope so! I guess the “nuggets” have been different each year that I have supervised, depending on the needs of the supervisee, what their goals were for the training year, and the specific nature of the supervision relationship. One consistent feedback that supervisees have offered is that they like the focus on object relations and psychodynamic interventions, given that for many students this has not been a focus in their previous training.
Any advice or words of wisdom for graduate students in training?

Start your good habits now for work-life balance. Especially as a trainee it can be tempting to put in extra hours and compromise your boundaries, but this lays the groundwork and routines for how you will approach your job in the future. I always tell students that a burned-out tired therapist is no help to anyone. It is an easy trap in this profession to give more time to work, because there is always more need and more work that could be done. My advice is to develop excellent time management skills, so that you can be ready to give 100% effort while you are working, but also be ready to leave work on time and go attend to your life. If the rest of your life is in balance, then you can come to work ready to fulfill your potential as an amazing therapist!

I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with Dr. Jenn Fox. Because of her supervision, I can confidently identify my theoretical orientation as object relations. I seriously cannot escape it and naturally filter most of what my clients say through that lens. If I could summarize the golden “nuggets” that she has instilled in me, I would include say these few things. (1) When responding to clients, make it short and sweet so that they actually hear the message. People can get lost in all of the words used to get to the point that you intend for them to hear. This also takes the pressure off of me as a therapist to say the “right” thing. (2) Test your limits when it comes to rapport. I always get cautious when I have a really good connection with the client that I am working with for the fear of crossing boundaries, becoming more of a friend, and losing sight of the therapeutic relationship. Jenn suggested that I continue to explore that dynamic and learn to use it effectively. (3) Be willing to make the first move when it comes to talking about issues of diversity. I have never worked with so many White clients clinically and it was a challenge for me this year. Jenn really encouraged me to initiate the uncomfortable conversations with my clients because doing so communicates the fact that I am willing to discuss those topics. While these are just a few of the lessons that I am taking with me, I have always felt empowered and validated by Jenn to continue doing the work I love. When it comes to college counseling, I now recognize the importance of supervision and am glad to have had an AWESOME experience.
STUDENT UPDATES

* Please be on the lookout for information regarding...
  
  • Student Rep elections
  
  • Student and Faculty Excellence Awards
  
  • GIPP End of the Year Party

If you have a flyer to post on the bulletin board, please place it in the bin located above the microwave. A class representative will check the bin daily to initial and post in the appropriate section!

2015-2016 Student Representatives

Preeti Sandhu, Overall Representative
Andrea Spink, 4th Year Representative
Daveon McMullen, 3rd Year Representative
Sonia Altavilla, 2nd Year Representative
Chandler Koury, 1st Year Representative