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PSYCH MATTERS

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The Importance and Benefits of Student Research

My experience with research as an undergraduate psychology major began about a year and half ago during Dr. Eberly's Youth & Adolescence class. It was announced that Sylvie Lombardo, who at that time, a graduate student would be coming to the next class to tell us about her involvement in homeless research at Wayne State University. Although she was a student in Clinical Psychology, she talked about the link between Clinical and Community Psychology. She insisted that sometimes one-on-one therapy was not the best way to help individuals because social and community problems cannot often be addressed in therapy. She said that we needed to understand that "helping individuals" falls on a continuum from treatment to prevention. Some problems need to be treated, many can be prevented. This approach made sense to me. Sometimes therapy can only address the symptoms of a greater problem, and it was refreshing to learn that Community Psychology focused on integrating treatment and prevention. From this moment, I knew that Community Psychology would be a good fit for me, and I wanted to learn more about it.

Fortunately, at the end of her presentation, she invited any interested students to visit her lab at WSU in order to get involved as a volunteer. I saw this as an excellent opportunity to learn more about the field as well as a chance to get some relevant research experience. I was among four OU students who attended an informational session on "Homelessness and Poverty." I became involved in the People and Transitions in Housing Project. The goal of this research was to understand pathways into homelessness; that is, understand how individual and social problems interact and lead to homelessness. My role in this research was to interview homeless adults at soup kitchens and shelters in the Detroit and Wayne county area. During this extensive face-to-face interview (2.5 to 4 hours), virtually every aspect of their lives was discussed including housing, service usage, childhood events, family environment, social network, drug/alcohol usage, mental health, and sexual behaviors.

Going to homeless shelters and soup kitchens in Detroit was nothing short of anxiety provoking. Like many Oakland University students, I have always lived in the suburbs and wasn't used to dealing with urban life. In all honesty, I had some stereotypes about Detroit. A simple evening out to Greek Town made me feel pretty uncomfortable. However, this study required a representative sample of homeless individuals, and it was necessary to recruit subjects from shelters and some poor neighborhoods. I received extensive training to address some of my discomfort and to ensure my safety. I very quickly overcame my preconceived ideas about poverty and found myself interacting with homeless individuals. I learned a great deal about myself and other human beings who are struggling with social and personal issues.

The principle investigator of the PATH project was Professor Toro, a seasoned community psychologist, and someone who became an invaluable mentor. Having a good mentor in your research area is critical to your success as an undergraduate student. As a member of the panel of professors who selects graduate students for WSU's clinical program, I considered him the best source for advice about getting into graduate school. He stated that there are four things that one must achieve to get in, 1) a good GPA, 2) above average GRE scores, 3) letters of recommendation, and 4) research experience.

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Chair Matters



As I step into the shoes of becoming Interim-Chair while Professor Stewart is on sabbatical during winter semester 2003, I have been asking myself what does it mean to make decisions for one of Oakland University's largest majors. The Department of Psychology has over 1,000 students declaring themselves to be psychology majors. There are 13 full-time dedicated faculty members, several wonderful part-time instructors, and two amazing administrative assistants who keep the department running smoothly. Equally important is our place in the community through outreach, community work, seminars, research contacts, and alumni who recognize the value of our department. I reflect upon my 6 years of service and recognize that it is a privilege to be a member of this department.

On October 31 and November 1, 2002, the Department of Psychology welcomed two esteemed individuals, Dr. Wilbert McKeachie (University of Michigan - Ann Arbor) and Dr. Richard Straub (University of Michigan - Dearborn), as our external reviewers for our 10-year self-study. I would like to take this opportunity to summarize their report. The opening overview paragraph states, "Taken as a whole, our assessment of the psychology program is strongly positive. We were impressed with the commitment of the faculty, administration, staff, and students to a high quality undergraduate education in psychology." The positive developments that Dr. McKeachie and Dr. Straub identified were the addition of newly-hired, "enthusiastic and energetic" faculty, a departmental climate that was characterized with collegiality and shared purpose, and several curricular changes that appeared to strengthen the undergraduate program. Those changes included making more consistent the different sections of Foundations in Contemporary Psychology (PSY 100) such that students have a common experience, a more recent careful examination of Introduction to Research Methods (PSY 250) and Statistics and Research Design (PSY 251) to ensure that students acquire a similar knowledge base and skill development in preparation for advanced courses, and a plan to set in motion standards of excellence in advanced topical courses.

Yet, Dr. McKeachie and Dr. Straub also identified serious concerns that need to be addressed by the department, especially by the administration. They suggest that there is serious strain on the faculty that puts students at a disadvantage pedagogically. Despite the newly hired faculty, there are presently only 10 full-time faculty members available because three faculty are on leave for administrative appointments and a sabbatical this past year. As a result, current student/faculty ratios are 58.5 for 100- and 200- level courses, and 27.4 for those courses numbered 300 or higher. Their message? "If only one change can be made as a response to our review, it should be to hire more [full-time] faculty members." Thankfully, as Dr. McKeachie and Dr. Straub noted, our part-time faculty are dedicated, highly competent instructors. We are very fortunate to have them be a part of our staff. However, additional full-time faculty are paramount to the future functioning of our department.

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Advising Matters



Getting into Graduate School

Welcome back to a new semester!! I would like to invite students to the upcoming Saturday seminar on "Getting in to Graduate School." If you even have a remote interest in graduate work, I strongly recommend that you attend. The Department of Psychology put this workshop together several years ago in order to help students prepare for graduate school. Being prepared and knowing how to plan out your undergraduate career is key. Too often, I find students who are ready to graduate and want to attend graduate school, but do not know how to find information about the whats, wheres, and hows of getting in. So please, come with questions. Several issues that will be addressed are:

- (1) What are the criteria for acceptance?
- (2) Where should I apply?
- (3) Are you prepared for graduate work?
- (4) The "ins and outs" of being a graduate student.
- (5) A timeline for preparing for the graduate application process.
- (6) What does it cost to go to graduate school?
- (7) What is a strategy for application?
- (8) The GREs
- (9) Preparing for the GREs, and any other questions you might have.

The Graduate Workshop Seminar will take place Saturday, February 8, 2003 in Lake Superior A (where the Psi Phi/Psychology meetings are held) from 9:00am to 12noon. Bagels, coffee, and juice will be available for you dedicated students. Should you like to join us, please sign-up with Lori in Room 130 Pryale Hall or call her at (248) 370-2300, or Sandy in Room 111Prayle Hall or call her at (248)370-2301 The Psi Chi/Psychology Club will be handing out packets of information about graduate school and getting in. Hope to see you there!!

Another issue that I would like to address is graduation. Two semesters before you believe you are ready to graduate, please get a senior audit done through the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) advising office. This form, ultimately, becomes your warrantee for graduation. They will double check ALL university requirements. At the CAS advising office, you can also pick up a graduation form. This form should be completed at the beginning of the semester from which you plan to graduate. Be sure to pay attention to deadlines and other requirements. ♦

Best wishes and congratulations!

~~Dr.Eberly

Psi Chi Matters

Psi Chi/Psychology Club Meetings and Events for Winter 2003

Tuesday Jan 14	Guest Speaker: Dr. David Shantz	12pm-12:45pm
Tuesday Jan 21	Guest Speaker:TBA	6pm-7:30pm
Wednesday Jan 22	*Community Charity:Helping the homeless at St.Athanasius Cathlioc Church	6pm-10pm
Monday February3	*Community Charity:Helping the homeless at St.Rene Cathlioc Church	6pm-10pm
Tuesday February 4	**Guest Speaker:Dr. Sifonis	12pm-12:45pm
Saturday February 8	“Getting into Graduate School”	9am-12pm
Wednesday February 12	Guest Speaker:TBA	6pm-7:30pm
Tuesday February 18	Guest Speaker:Dr.Eberly will be speaking on prosocial behavior and adolescents.	12pm-12:45pm
Tuesday March 11	General Meeting	12pm-12:45pm
Wednesday March 19	Guest Speaker:TBA	12pm-12:45pm
Tuesday March 25	General Meeting	12pm-12:45pm
Tuesday April 8	***Guest Speaker:TBA	12pm-12:45pm

Everyone is invited to all meetings!!

All meeting are located in room Lake Superior A, located in the lower level of the oakland center
Guest Speaker meetings will include free lunch.

There are other events and charity services that are in the works and will be planned at General Meetings.

*These events are helping the homeless through Macomb Counties McCrest Program, directions will be given at the General Meetings.

**This meeting held in Lake Michigan

***This meeing located in Lake Superior B

Psi Chi Comment

A Message from the President.....

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is Jennifer Shailor and I am a senior here at Oakland University. In September of 2002, I was given the opportunity to become president of Psi Chi/Psychology Club. Since then, I have been doing everything possible to make Psi Chi/Psychology Club a successful student organization. I would like to give everyone an overview of what Psi Chi/Psychology Club did last semester, and what we will be doing this semester.

Every month we have three meetings, one is a general meeting and at the other two meetings, we have guest speakers come in to present various topics in psychology. At the general meetings, Psi Chi/Psychology Club gets together to discuss what is going on in the club, upcoming community service events, fundraising, and any other issues that may come up during the meeting. One of the two meetings in which we have a guest speaker is a seminar, which is held on Wednesday evenings. The seminars last for one and a half hours as opposed to the Tuesday afternoon meetings, which only last about 45 minutes. By attending these meetings, students are able to acquaint themselves with their fellow students, and also acquaint themselves with the research being conducted in the many areas of psychology.

On November 2, 2002, Psi Chi/Psychology Club sponsored the annual Careers in Psychology Workshop. This workshop is geared towards informing students about the different job opportunities available to them after obtaining a B.A., M.A., Ph.D., or a Psy.D. in psychology. On February 8, 2003, we will be sponsoring the annual Getting Into Graduate School Workshop. Attending this workshop will give you all the information you will need about getting into graduate school, applying to graduate school, and much more!! If you are planning on attending graduate school, I would highly recommend that you attend this workshop.

During the winter semester, Psi Chi/Psychology Club will be sponsoring many community service events, which will give students a chance to help the community. Last semester, we participated in the McCrest program on two occasions, which turned out to be a great experience for the students who attended. While here we assisted the homeless and those in need by serving food to and talking to them. Next semester, we will be working not only with McCrest, but also Habitat for Humanity, Haven and various nursing homes in the community.

One of my goals as president of Psi Chi/Psychology Club is to increase attendance at our meetings. I believe that one way to accomplish my goal is to inform everyone about Psi Chi/Psychology Club. Hopefully we will see you at our upcoming events for the winter semester now that you have more information about our club and what we do as a student organization. Please feel free to visit our website at www.oakland.edu/psych/psi-chi. ♦

~Jen Schailor, Psi Phi/Psychology Club President

Student Research

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One must have all four; even a 4.0 GPA is worthless without the other three components. The letters of recommendation come with the research experience. Most undergraduates think that just collecting data for a professor is sufficient. Although any involvement in research is beneficial, you actually need to produce something of your own in order to compete vigorously with other Ph.D. program applicants. At this point, I knew that I really needed to produce something tangible.

Dr. Toro encouraged me to do my own project. While I interviewed participants, I started to notice certain trends, I have always been interested in HIV-prevention and I observed that in order to survive or to support a drug addiction, many homeless individuals in our sample engaged in risky sexual behaviors. In addition, I wanted to know what type of services could potentially benefit this particular group of people. We decided that this topic was appropriate to present at the American Public Health Association's annual conference. I submitted an abstract that was later accepted for poster presentation.

Preparing and presenting research was a new experience. Because I had a very vague idea about how to go about doing this, I sought out Dr. Lombardo to mentor me through this process. It was just my luck that she came back to Oakland as a full-time faculty member and that her area of expertise is on prevention of risky sexual behaviors. In addition she was familiar with the study; she has designed the sexual behaviors measure that I used for my study. Again, it's important to choose a mentor with similar research interests; therefore, Dr. Lombardo and I were a good match. She assisted me through each step of preparation. When the time came to present, I found myself able to speak intelligently about risky sexual behaviors with a sharp poster!

Presenting at the American Public Health Association's convention in Philadelphia was a memorable experience. Presenters and attendees were largely medical doctors, nurses, psychologists, and graduate students. As an undergraduate, I was a little intimidated to be among such an impressive group of individuals. However, this feeling was short lived, and I found everyone to be very friendly. It felt good to finally share the results of months of hard work. Those who visited my poster offered a lot of positive feedback. I also had a chance to converse with other researchers investigating similar issues. I even met one person who thanked me profusely because my results were just what she needed to corroborate her own research. Of course this was a team effort, it is because I became involved in research conducted by Dr. Toro and Dr. Lombardo that I had the opportunity to develop this study. It felt good that others learned something from our study, and that we made a contribution to the understanding of homelessness and risky sexual behaviors.

Getting involved with the Wayne State Research Group on Homelessness and Poverty was one of the best decisions I've ever made. After completion of the People and Transitions in Housing research, I was offered full time employment working on the H.A.L.O study, a longitudinal study that has been following over 400 homeless and housed adolescents since 1997. I was elated to be offered a job working within the field of Psychology. As a commuter student who needs to work for a living, this turned out to be the perfect arrangement. Needless to say, I was happy to abandon my retail job!

The APHA poster presentation was exciting but it was only a stepping-stone to other things. Dr. Lombardo and I, along with Dr. Toro from WSU plan to publish these results. Of course, getting published will involve a great deal of work, and a great deal of learning on my part. Not only will this hopefully lead to graduate school acceptance, but I hope that it will prepare me for the rigor involved in being a future graduate student.

This article isn't intended as a venue to boast about my own success, I am writing to urge all undergraduates that you can do the same. There is opportunity right here at OU! I've done research with Dr. Butzlaff, and I just started working in Dr. Lombardo's lab where we are starting a project on family environment and problem behaviors among late adolescents. These opportunities can be found simply by talking to your professors. Classes offered here at Oakland provide an excellent foundation for doing research in psychology. Applying this knowledge in the field through research assistantships has enriched my experience as an undergraduate psychology student and can do the same for you. ♦

~Jason Forney

Student Matters

(continued from page 2)

Dr. McKeachie and Dr. Straub spoke positively of the new faculty, especially their "talent, energy, and impressive qualifications." However, Dr. McKeachie and Dr. Straub were concerned about the work expectations placed on untenured faculty. Over the years, the focus of promotion has moved from an emphasis on teaching to an increased emphasis on research. They suggest that teaching and research be given equal weight to ensure the quality of the undergraduate experience. With regard to research, however, they were concerned with the multiple role demands that take faculty away from grant writing, renewed research programs, and other valuable [scholarly] activities. Although the efforts that faculty put into undergraduate research is commendable, it, too, competes with time for professional research and writing. In order to accomplish the sometimes competing goals of faculty research and sponsorship of undergraduate research, they suggest that more involvement is needed from the administration to identify funding opportunities and that the currently informal mentorship program be made formal, such that faculty are compensated for working with undergraduate students through a course release.

Another major issue included our building and facilities. AARRGGHH!! They strongly recommended that Pryale Hall be renovated. Frankly speaking, I don't think our carpet has been replaced for over 30 years. According to the administration, the department of psychology is responsible for updates, but we're struggling with our bare-bones budget to attempt to have up-to-date computers, software, and address basic operating needs. Students must have access to up-to-date computers and pedagogical materials. As such, building renovation takes a back seat.

In closing, the challenges outlined above can be viewed as road-blocks or opportunities. I believe that given the enthusiasm and dedication of faculty and students, we have the potential to address those "opportunities" toward the betterment of The Department of Psychology. ♦

~Dr. Eberly

Editorial Position Available

I will be graduating next year and would love to be training a new assistant to make the transition for PsychMatters easier. The job is very flexible and not difficult. You will be knowledgeable and experienced in so many more areas. I will always use the various skills that I have learned through my experience with PsychMatters. These include my contacts with faculty, Psi Phi/Psychology Club, editing experience, and a host of others.. The contacts that I have had have helped boost my resume', gain recommendations, make friendships, and get involved in many things. I am grateful for all the opportunities I have gained throughout this time. Everything that I am taking away from PsychMatters is applicable in all aspects of life. I use these abilities in the academic setting., workplace, and in personal relationships. In addition I have enhanced my tool box of skills such as: working with and depending on others, pressure of a deadline, challenging my personal ability and creativity and numerous others. This position would be ideal for someone that will be here for the next school year, Fall 2003 and Winter of 2004. There really is no experience required because the program isn't a typical one and is easy to learn.

If you are interested in this fulfilling experience please contact myself at aslobait@oakland.edu or Jen Schailor at vetseanarian2@comcast.net.

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Postage

The Quarterly Newsletter of Psychology at Oakland University

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