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Psychology News

Note From the Chair

Another year has rolled around, and it's time for our annual newsletter. In fact, it is a bit late. The department has changed a bit. We've hired two new faculty members. Rui Ni is in human factors program and interested in driving, vision, and aging. Sabina Low joined the clinical program and her research area is in health risk behavior prevention.

We will be starting another round of following up our graduates shortly. For those who have been survey before, the questionnaire will be much shorter. The summaries material we gather has been extremely useful in shaping the program, showing to administrators, and particularly to prospective graduate students. Your help with this is greatly appreciated.

We really hope you enjoy the rest of this newsletter!

-Charlie

CCSR: Community Psychologists in Action

Greg Meissen, Ph.D., Director of the Center for Community Support and Research

This year the Self-Help Network: Center for Community Support and Research changed its name to the Center for Community Support and Research (CCSR) to reflect the expanded nature of the work they are doing. From its humble beginnings as self-help clearinghouse CCSR has become a vital capacity building and leadership resource for Wichita and other communities in Kansas. While maintaining its original vision of researching and promoting peer support for persons with severe and persistent mental illness, CCSR offers a wide variety of services aimed at building leadership capacity within communities.

For many years CCSR has worked to develop and improve Consumer Run Organizations (CRO's) in Kansas. CRO's are non-profit organizations operated by consumers of mental health services that provide support to persons with mental illness. On July 1st of 2007, Medicaid approved reimbursement for the services and expenditures for Certified Peer Special-

CCSR (con't.)

ists (CPS's) in Kansas. A CPS is a mental health services consumer who assists other consumers in developing a personalized recovery plan and providing support and information to consumers in their recovery process. Kansas Health Solutions was created to help manage these services in Kansas. In Kansas, every mental health center is required to have at least one CPS on staff. Many centers employ more that one CPS. In fact one center employs 20 CPS's. CCSR was asked to develop and implement the certification and training for this program. Having been a champion of peer support for many years, Dr. Greg Meissen, Director of CCSR, is excited about the opportunity to provide the educational part of this program, "It feels really great to offer this educational program for people to give them some orientation. They already have the skills, because it is about peer support, but it is about how to operate within a mental health center or other domains and to provide this very valuable way of helping people with mental illness." Trainings take place in retreat settings and classes are taught by experienced CPS's. One of the skills taught in the training is how to start and facilitate a Self-Help group. Many self-help groups in mental health centers are lead by mental health professionals instead of consumers. In this way they can maintain the true peer support nature of a self-help group. CCSR has also instituted a research project on this program and has collected data for the past year on various aspects of this program. Over the next year CCSR will be actively seeking new ways to increases the utilization of this valuable service.

CCSR utilizes leadership skill development in a number of its projects and has played a vital role in utilizing existing community leadership programs to promote leadership skill development and civic engagement in local communities in Kansas. Meissen feels that the key to addressing current fiscal and social issues within communities, lies in promoting civic engagement and building leadership capacity, "it's not about Topeka or Washington coming up with these

huge solutions…it's about larger number of persons actually living in those communities getting involved to make a difference". In the fall of 2007 the Kansas Health Foundation granted $30 million over a 10 year period to fund the Kansas Leadership Center. CCSR works closely with the Center to continue to improve the capacity of community leadership programs in Kansas.

As a part of its mission to develop civic leaderships in communities, CCSR has played a major role in Visioneering Wichita.. Visioneering Wichita started in 2004 with the goal of improve the quality of life in Wichita area. In order to accomplish this, a 20-year strategic plan was developed to create a network of independent community coalitions who would target specific issues such as healthcare, economic development, and recreation. There are currently 16 coalitions and several of the coalitions have become independent non-profit organizations. These coalitions consist of a wide variety of community members. Some of the members are professionals working in a field related to the topic area of the coalition, but many of the members are either consumers of services address by the coalition or are just interested citizens who wish to be engaged in community issues.

CCSR also supports leadership in Kansas youths. A high school age youth leadership organization, called Youth United for Positive Action (YUPA) is now being housed at CCSR. YUPA asked CCSR to work with them to create a positive leadership approach to youth development.   While many projects focusing on youth focus on various problems, such as drugs and alcohol and teen pregnancies, experienced by youths, Meissen is thrilled to see that this program focuses on leadership development and active community involvement of youths in Wichita, "we often hear about teen pregnancy rates of 7 to 9 percent, and we forget that over 90% of teens did not get pregnant. The group promotes involvement of youth in community organizations that have a focus on youth and organizations that do not. In February they organized

CCSR *(con't.)*

and hosted a summit on youth leadership. The summit was attended by 23 youth leadership programs from across the state. "These are not future leaders; these are today's leaders. They just have not had many birthdays yet." said Meissen.

As a part of the Psychology Department, CCSR currently has 11 doctoral students at different stages of their study. CCSR offers students, who plan to use their degrees in community settings, a wide variety of experiences. Students are actively engaged in research and practical applications of community psychology.

NIAR *Teaches Students More Than Science*

Imagine flying an aircraft in Afghanistan from the Mojave Desert, nearly 8000 miles away. Now imagine flying four to eight aircrafts at the same time. The U.S. Air Force currently utilizes unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV's) to conduct many overseas operations. UAV's are flown by pilots who control the aircraft via "pilot and sensor operator stations". The design of these stations presents many complex challenges. These stations must be designed to allow a pilot to conduct a multitude of tasks simultaneously and to address such issues as the time lag in communication between the control station and the aircraft. The National Institute for Aviation Research (NIAR) Human Factors lab is playing an important role in making that possible. The company responsible for designing the control stations, for the U.S. Air Force selected NIAR over other university labs due to a very unique set of qualifications within the lab.

Pilot and sensor operator station.

While the wealth of experience in designing aviation crew stations and software usability experience was an essential part of being selected for this contract, NIAR's approach to working with companies set them apart from other universities. Alex Chaparro, Ph.D., Human Factors Program Coordinator, believes that a combination of quality research and a history of providing practical services to aviation companies made NIAR an excellent fit for this project, "We have a lot of practical experience working with companies working on issues related to this and because NIAR is focused on providing services that

companies need. NIAR's mission is to provide aviation research and support to companies and the other universities do not emphasize that as much. There is often a greater emphasis on tenure and publications."

The graduate students in the Human factors lab have greatly benefited from their involvement in this project. "This is not just about theory it is a real world product that is going to be used by soldiers. They are given significant pieces of the work that is their responsibility. It a lot of real world practical experience with huge implications." states Chaparro. This means that the students working on this project are not only learning the theoretical aspects of Human Factors psychol-

NIAR *(con't)*

ogy, but will also graduate from the program with two to three years of experience of working in the field. They are learning how to take the concepts that they learn in textbooks and apply those concepts while developing a product. This places them at a considerable advantage in the job market.

One of the skills that students have had to learn on this project is to be flexible and adapt to an ever changing situation. UAV's are a new technology and the development of the operator stations is a very dynamic process. "The concepts of how they should be operated are constantly changing, so our design has to evolve with the view of how these things should operate and what the operator's role is. The challenging part is that it is not like you get a set of specifications and you design to those specifications. Those specifications are constantly changing." explains Chaparro.

Communication is an essential part of this project. The development of the station involves input from NIAR, the company holding the contract to develop the station, and the Air Force. The dynamic nature of the developmental process requires frequent and detailed communication. There are daily teleconferences utilizing online software which allows participants to view each others computer screens. This technology allows the visual sharing of detailed technical information instantaneously and helps in overcoming challenges presented by the geographical distance between Wichita and San Diego. In addition to the daily teleconferences, at least one member of the lab will travel to the company to attend meetings and discuss issues related to the project in person. Chaparro points out that the students are learning a great deal about communicating with companies while developing a product and that he has a great deal of confidence in their ability to communicate effectively, "They are really good so I allow them to communicate directly with the company representatives and engineers."

This project requires the students to understand not only the psychological principles, but to be able to communicate those principles in a manner that is usable from an engineering perspective. This is not always easy

as the students are often confronted with situations where they must explain to the customer that a design that he or she has worked hard to develop makes sense from an engineering perspective, but that it does not work from a psychological perspective. "It's is a lot like telling someone that their baby is ugly." explains Chaparro, " In terms of the project, I depend on the students and one of the most critical components of that trust, for me, is know that they will act in a professional manner, even when the customer gets mad". Despite the challenges the relationship between the company and NIAR has developed into a positive and productive one. The company is very pleased with knowledge and professionalism of the students and has communicated a desire to hire students working on this project.

From an educational perspective, this project has contributed the classroom experience. "There are a lot of unique lessons learned from the perspective that you see what is written in a textbook and then you are faced with a design and trying to see where the concepts in the textbook match and how they can be applied in this unique situation.   Over the course of time working on such a project you get a good perspective on the match and mismatch between experimental psychology literature, human factors literature and real world design." says Chaparro. Even the students who are not working on this project benefit from the experiences of their fellow students during classroom discussions. Dr. Chaparro uses these experiences to illustrate how the concepts he is teaching can be applied in an actual design setting.

This project is a perfect example of how universities and industry can collaborate to develop safe products based on scientific principles while benefitting the learning experience of students. The company has contracted NIAR for another year to continue work on this project. Chaparro and his students are looking forward to another year of combining science and practice in an exciting field.

Graduate: Nicole Rogers

The skills one learns in doctoral program in Psychology are valuable in many academic fields and disciplines. Nicole Rogers graduated from the HF program in 2003. Last year the School of Community Affairs (SCA) welcomed Rogers back to WSU. She is an Assistant Professor in Gerontology. Rogers is enthusiastic about her position in the SCA, "I have always wanted an academic position. I enjoy teaching but also enjoy the ability to continue my research interests. I find both aspects challenging. I like how research builds upon itself so although you have a defined research area, new questions and studies continually arise – nothing is ever the same."

In an interview with Rogers, she explained that her interest in older adults began when she was an undergraduate studying sports medicine and health, "The summer before my senior year I worked in an occupational therapy department at a veteran's hospital. The majority of patients were older adults and this is when I decided I wanted to work in the aging field." After earning her Bachelors Degree, Rogers entered a masters program in exercise physiology, working with a psychophysiologist interested in older adults. Rogers explains, "This was also my first exposure to the psychology of aging as my advisor had interests in both psychology and exercise physiology. During my masters I worked with an older adult fitness program and really found my passion working with this population. It was here that I also experienced research for the first time – leading me to pursue a doctorate."

Rogers pointed out that statistical knowledge is very advantageous in the pursuit of an academic career, "my statistical knowledge is very useful in my current work setting. Having a solid statistical background not only helps in research, but also opens another possibility for teaching. I feel that having the ability and desire to teach a variety of statistical classes makes you a better candidate for an academic position." She also advised students, who wish to pursue an academic career, that beyond statistical knowledge, the ability to publish research is very important, "The ability to write and publish research projects is also valuable. Earning tenure is dependent on publications and having experience prior to your first position is very helpful. Definitely try to publish your 2nd year project and also help your advisor

in their research to earn a spot on one of their publications."

Rogers also feels that the ability to secure external funding is a very important skill to develop prior to applying for an academic position, "Grant writing is also an important skill that can help set you apart from other candidates. I applied for one small summer grant from WSU and was also a co-author on a few larger applications applied for by WSU professors. During my time at the KU medical school my position was dependent on procuring grant funding – I learned a lot on the fly. My advice to current students is to apply for any and all university or graduate student awards. Take grant writing classes and attend workshops. Having grant writing experience can only help you as you apply for academic positions." In an interview with Dr. Michael Birzer, Director of SCA, he explained out that the ability to secure external funding "markets a candidate for an academic position heads and shoulders above those who do not have that ability". He explains, "We really stress external funding with particularly the new faculty. It is important that they have had that experience in graduate school."

As teaching is central to the work of an academic, teaching experience is also a valuable skill when applying for a faculty position. Rogers feels that the structure of the WSU Psychology department was very helpful to her, "Having experience teaching psych 101 and assisting stats 401 was extremely beneficial. Teaching experience really helps when applying for an academic position. Some programs do not offer graduate students lead teaching positions – so again, if you have experience teaching this may set you apart from other candidates." Birzer added that online teaching experience is also helpful, "We are beginning to look at whether candidates have any online experience. There are so many programs out there who are offering that option to give non-traditional students additional opportunities to obtain a degree."

Rogers feels that she was successful in obtaining an academic position not only because of her unique skills, but because she was able to communicate how those skills could be valuable in that particular setting, "I tried to present a solid vitae and cover letter. I felt the cover letter was important to highlight my experience and skills and what unique skills I could bring to the gerontology program. I also presented my re-

Rogers (con't)

search agenda during the interview process. My intention was to show that I had a research track record that would easily translate to the opportunities at WSU."

Graduate students who are considering an academic career should speak with their advisors about their interests. With careful planning and a structured focus, students can develop a skill set that places them in a better position to compete for an academic position. As academic psychologists can pursue and obtain faculty positions in other fields and disciplines, students should pursue other interests they have while in graduate school by incorporating those interests in their research and practical experiences.

Psychology at GRASP

The Psychology Department was well represented at the fourth annual university-wide Graduate Research and Scholarly Projects (GRASP) Symposium held on April 25 of this year. Fourteen of the presentations were from the Psychology Department. Amie McKibban placed first in the Oral Division with her presentation, "Assessing Academic (Dis)honesty: A Factor Analytic Study". McKibban's research is a factor analytic study design to develop understandable constructs in the measurement of cheating. The study revealed six distinct factors in cheating; reducing workload by borrowing, creative padding, mutual sharing, doing for others, false personal situations, and using others.

The Peoples Choice award went to Rachel Pearson for her poster, "Sexual Satisfaction and Commitment". The purpose of Pearson's study was to examine the mechanisms by which commitment is associated with sexual satisfaction. The results of the study indicate that women who reported being more committed in their relationship also reported an increased use of the three pro-relationship sexual behaviors.

Other Psychology Department Presentations:

Assessing the Behaviors, Attitudes and Perceptions of Men Who Have Sex with Men Regarding HIV/AIDS, by Philip Pettis and Rhonda Lewis-Moss, (Faculty Mentor)

Assessing the Health Behaviors of Emerging African American Adults, byFelecia Lee and Rhonda Lewis-Moss

Classification and Regression Trees as Alternatives to Regression, by Mandy C. Phelps and Edgar C. Merkle

Diagnostic Aids and Overall Physician Ratings, by Kelsey Karnopp, Heather Morrison and Victoria Shaffer

Examining Website Accessibility Among The Disabled Population, by Mikki Phan and Barbara Chaparro

Ratings of Physicians Relying on Experts Versus Physicians Relying on Decision Aids, by C. Adam Probst , Victoria Shaffer, Charles Lambdin, Hal Arkes, & Mitch Medow

Real Choice Systems Transformation Initiative, by Oliwier Dziadkowiec, BA; Trish McKenney, MA; Scott Wituk, PhD; Greg Meissen, PhD

Scale Implications for Confidence Elicitation, by Tara Schultz and Ed Merkle

Teacher Training for Head Start Classrooms, by Desirae Moreno, Christy Just, James Snyder, Ph.D

The Great Between-Subjects Assumption, by Charles Lambdin, Victoria Shaffer

Using Self-Monitoring and Goal Setting to Increasing Walking Behavior in Older Adults, by Mindy L. Slimmer and Nicole L. Rogers

Wichita Youth Empowerment Partnership: A Community Assessment of District One, by Dina M. Elias-Rodas

Congratulations Marci and Judy

Marci Nelson and Judy Hill are the glue that holds the Psychology Department together. Both faculty and students turn to them time after time to help us achieve our goals. They are also ever supportive and they know how to get things done. This December, Marci and Judy celebrated their own achievements. Both received their Liberal Arts Associate Degrees. They are both working on their Liberal Arts Bachelors of General Studies .

NEW GRADUATE STUDENTS

The Psychology Departments welcomes the following students:

Community:
  Lisette Jacobson
  Chris Kirk
  Felicia Lee
  Ashlee Keele-Lien
  Karen Countryman-Roswur
  Justin Greenleaf

Clinical:
  Suzanne Gird
  Britania Latronica
  Ronald Partridge
  Blake Webster

Human Factors:
  Carolina Bates
  Bobby Nguyen
  Mikki Phan

2007-2008 PROGRAM GRADUATES

Congratulations to the following graduates of the doctoral Program:

Summer 2007

Monica Brooker

Kassy Johnson

Robin Heinrichs

Fall 2007

Tara Gregory

Chakema Carmack

Spring Hull

Christine Phillips