

SPSA Newsletter

A Message from the President

I want to thank those of you who have joined SPSA and/or attended the last meeting. I hope you will take advantage of the intern panel that will be at our next meeting on December 4, at 8:55 pm. The discussion will focus on getting an internship including: where to start, what to bring to the interview, interview questions, and the intern's current experiences. The SPSA board has worked hard to provide great opportunities for members of SPSA and next weekend SPSA will be having the first holiday party (see upcoming events). For those of you who have not joined SPSA, I hope you will find value in what SPSA does and will become part of the organization. Lastly, I wish all of you good luck on finals and happy holidays.

---Lori Workman---



Contents

A message from the President	1
Spotlight on a Professor	2-3
Comps v. Thesis	4-5
Internship/Practicum	6-7
Upcoming Events	8



Spotlight on a Professor

In order to help students get to know their professors better, each SPSA newsletter will feature an interview with a faculty member. The first professor to be featured is SPSA's faculty sponsor Dr. Kristin Powers.

Dr. McBride (far right) and Dr. Powers (far left)

1. **What are your hobbies?** I don't really have any hobbies (I had a stamp collection when I was 10 but my dog ate it). My favorite things to do (in no particular order) are to read novels, hike and camp, swim and boggie board in the ocean, play soccer (though I'm currently retired – a comeback may happen one day), chat with my friends and play games (Yahtzee, Sorry, Monopoly etc.) with my husband and children.
2. **Where did you grow up (Hometown)?** I was born in Minneapolis, MN but I grew up in Milwaukee WI. I am the second child of four. My older sister is a Clinical Psychologist who conducts research on foster youth with disabilities at Portland State University. My two younger brothers were trans-racially adopted and both have disabilities, despite these "risk-factors," they are incredibly resilient adults who are my friends and inspiration. We grew up in a racially and economically integrated neighborhood called Sherman Park. My parents were very involved in social activism. I attended racially integrated public school and consider the opportunity to learn within such a diverse group of students to be one of the most positive and formative experiences of my youth.
3. **Where did you go to undergraduate and graduate school?** I attended University of Wisconsin, Madison for undergraduate school (BS in Psychology) and University of Minnesota, Twin Cities for Graduate school.
4. **What are your research interests? What are you currently researching?** Assisting vulnerable populations to transition to adulthood. Currently, I've conducted research on the influence of gender on the transition-related expectations and experiences of students with disabilities. I am interested in expanding this work to other populations (i.e., foster care youth, children of migrant workers, etc.) as I believe there is much that can be shared in terms of effective prevention and intervention programs. Additionally, I am collaborating with two students on cross validating some of the existing research on the stability of Experimental Analysis of Academic Performance (EAAP) on older youth as well as examining the effectiveness of single versus combined EAAP treatment packages. The implications of this line of research will be to further (ideally) move practices beyond just diagnosing academic delays to identifying why the delay occurred and how best to treat it.
5. **Are you looking for RAs?** Right now I don't have funding for RAs. We will be looking to hire a Graduate Assistant for the Clinic next fall as Joan Kim (sadly for us) will be leaving the clinic for an internship position.
6. **What first got you interested in school psychology?** I was an engineering major, and then switched to psychology mid way through undergraduate school because I liked learning about human information processing. Because of my brother's learning disabilities, I was always interested in why learning certain things comes more easily to some than to others. I was fortunate that my mother was in a book club that consisted largely of school psychologists, so she was able to direct me to the best of the bunch to learn more about the profession. Thus I found myself at the tender age of 19 in Judy McBride's office learning about her role as a school psychologist at Vincent High School. If I had any doubt up until then, they were gone after talking with Judy.

Spotlight on a Professor...

7. What is the biggest challenge you have faced as a school psychologist? I think the hardest part was getting teachers to implement the interventions. The root of this problem, in many cases, was the teacher's beliefs about the immutability of the child's problems, their own sense of efficacy and whether they thought I (or whoever was making the suggestion) had any credibility. It was painful at first being brushed off either directly or covertly (I remember celebrating the inroads I thought I had made with a recalcitrant teacher, only to discover over happy hour beers with another vetted teacher in the school that all my suggestions had been dismissed as overly naïve). I learned an important lesson (which will be revealed in EDP 536)
8. What did you do before you got into school psychology? I worked as a teacher's aide (paraprofessional) for a year prior to beginning graduate school. During graduate school I was a research assistant for Jim Ysseldyke at the National Center on Educational Outcome (NCEO) which examined the participation of students with disabilities in large scale assessment. I was also an RA for the Indian Resiliency Impact Study (IRIS) which provide the data set for my dissertation: Ecological supports for American Indian students.

Check out
www.edjoin.org for
available school
psychology positions!



First SPSA meeting.



Comps v. Theses

First year students have a difficult decision to make regarding if they want to take on the endeavor of writing a thesis or take the comprehensive exam. To help make the decision easier Anthony Mercado and Megan Miller have decided to share with you their experiences...

My Comps Experience

The comprehensive examination for the Masters of Arts degree in Educational Psychology will be discussed with you in greater detail at an informational meeting; however, I will give you a brief description of what it entails and how I prepared for it. The exam consists of an essay and a multiple choice section. There are three areas of study the three essay questions will cover: development, research methods, and learning. The multiple choice and short answer section also includes these three areas of study as well as program evaluation questions. A study guide that lists what the exam will entail will also be provided.

I took the proactive approach to studying for comps. I began studying with two classmates in the beginning of the spring semester. We gathered information from course books and study guides from past students and then outlined what we wanted to focus on and what we felt we had a good handle on that required less study time. We studied for a couple of hours a week before one of our classes, met a few times on the weekends, and by the time of the exam we were well prepared and not overly stressed. I felt that working with a group of three was very helpful, because if one person could not make a study session then you still have the other. I highly recommend groups of 2-3; however, the size of study groups should be determined based on your personal learning style. If you want extra help, e-mail a professor and ask if they can set up a study session to review what to expect on comps. When I was preparing, professors like Dr. Masunaga, Dr. Coats, and others were more than willing to help, just as long as you asked them nicely. Also do not be afraid to ask a student outside of your cohort for extra assistance. Older students can be your best resource for information. I know this is a very brief description, so if you have any additional questions about the exam feel free to contact me by email. Good luck and happy studying!

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Thinking about applying for an internship at LAUSD? The application is available at www.teachinla.com

Thesis

Writing a thesis is a rewarding, yet difficult, task. Since the process can take over a year, drafting a thesis requires the author to be diligent and dedicated. Students must decide during their first year as a graduate student whether they would like to write a thesis or take the comprehensive exam. Students should ask themselves the following questions when deciding between thesis and comprehensive exam: Am I a person who is able to set deadlines and work toward those deadlines? Am I a person who is able to work independently and ask for help when needed? Do I have life commitments which will hinder my ability to dedicate the necessary time to working on a thesis?

There are many reasons to choose to complete a thesis, just like there are many reasons to choose to take the comprehensive exam. Choosing one over the other is a personal decision, as both are difficult in different ways. There are many benefits to writing a thesis. Students writing a thesis choose three people to be on their thesis committee: a chair and two committee members. Most often, the committee members are professors who the student works closely with in completing their research and writing. These relationships can be very beneficial for students, as graduate students learn a tremendous amount from being guided by prominent researchers in their chosen field. Another benefit of writing a thesis is gaining research experience and the knowledge of how to write about research. Students who complete a thesis also have a permanent product they can keep throughout their lifetime. Furthermore, many employers and admission committees for Ph.D. programs look favorably upon students who take the initiative and have the necessary work ethic to complete a thesis.

Once students decide they would like to complete a thesis, they should begin thinking of who they would like to be on their thesis committee. Chosen thesis chairs should be able to help students decide on a research topic and methodology for their research study. Students should begin researching their chosen topic as soon as possible. All articles found and read pertaining to the research study should be kept in an easily accessible location, as they will be included in the thesis.

A thesis consists of five chapters: Introduction, Review of Literature, Methodology, Results, and Discussion. The student can and should write the first three chapters of the thesis as early as possible. In the Introduction Section, the writer introduces the research study. The writer discusses all previous research relevant to the present research study in the Review of Literature section. In the Methodology section, the writer discusses the specifics of how the research study will be conducted. In the Results section, the writer conveys the results of the present research study. Finally, in the Discussion section, the writer discusses the meaning of the present research study results in relation to previous research and possible further research. Prior to writing the Results and Discussion chapters, the student must collect the necessary data to analyze and discuss. Students should expect to submit drafts of their chapters to their thesis chair for revision suggestions and revise the chapters accordingly.

I am a third year graduate student who completed my thesis this past year. The process of completing a thesis was extremely time consuming and difficult. However, I feel extremely proud

to have completed such a demanding task. One of the biggest challenges I faced was having and making enough time to work on my thesis. Particularly during my second year as a graduate student, I had many time commitments, such as four demanding courses per semester, practicum two days a week, and a research assistant job. Yet, I was still able to make the time to work on my thesis and eventually complete it. I got a lot of support from my thesis chair, Dr. Kristin Powers, who was always willing to help me. I learned so much from the experience of conducting research and writing about my research, which I have found invaluable. I encourage students to choose the thesis

6

Find out more
about the praxis
exam at
www.nasponline.org/certification/becoming_NCSP.aspx

Internship

Searching for an internship placement can be a daunting task. Last year, like many second year school psychology graduate students, I felt the pressure early on to be actively looking for a placement. However, most school districts do not start accepting application materials or setting up interviews until the middle of the spring semester (around March or April). This does not mean you should be waiting until this date to search for school districts in which you might like to work and determining what application materials you will need to compile. The more prepared you are, the more professional you will look to employers. I suggest you begin searching school district websites, edjoin.org, and speaking with fellow students (including third year students in internship placements) in January of your second year. Winter break is a great time to enjoy your break from strenuous classes and start compiling information on districts and putting together your application materials.

I recommend applying to at least a few school districts because you want to ensure you get placed in at least one of the districts. The prospect of getting a paid internship is usually on the forefront of students' minds. There are two types of paid internships: those which pay you a full school psychologist's salary and those which pay you a stipend. The demands for the two are quite different. If you are getting paid a full salary, you should expect to be working as a full time school psychologist. Usually, when you work for a stipend, you have more supervision and a fully credentialed school psychologist at each of your school sites working with you. Obtaining a paid internship is typically harder than obtaining a non-paid internship because there is more competition. Everyone wants to get paid for their hard work!

I suggest applying to at least one district which offers a full paid internship, if you feel ready to carry this much responsibility. Furthermore, I suggest applying to at least one district which does not pay their interns because this can be a great backup internship placement. Lastly, I suggest applying to at least a couple districts which offer stipends, such as Long Beach Unified School District, ABC Unified, and Huntington Beach High School District. Typically, districts require the following application materials: a letter of intent, a résumé, a copy of all transcripts, and three letters of recommendation.

December 4,
2007 join SPSA at
El Torrito for a
panel discussion
on internships.

Once you apply to districts, someone from the district will call you to set up dates for interviews. The interviews will vary by district and will be more stringent depending on the type of pay they are offering. For internships in which they are offering full pay, you should expect a more intense interview process. Larger districts tend to have pre-specified interview questions which they ask all candidates because they have a larger pool of applicants who need to be compared in a fair manner. For smaller districts, the interviews might be more of an informal conversation outlining the applicant's experience and knowledge, the district's policies, and how the two align. It is important to be prepared for the interviews by dressing well and reviewing basic educational law and assessment practices.

You should also go into the interviews prepared to assess the districts to see if they are a good fit for you. You might get more than one offer, and you want to be aware of what the different districts have to offer you as far as supervision and experiences. The internship experience is different than the practicum experience in that you are typically given more responsibilities and you work at the district full time as opposed to one or two days a week. Therefore, you want to make sure the school district in which you choose to complete your internship hours will be a good fit for you as far as giving you the necessary training and experiences to be a successful, proficient first year school psychologist. Good luck with the application process, and I hope you obtain a great internship placement!

Practicum

The school psychology practicum experience has been an authentic experience for me. It has given me the opportunity to observe real life experiences related to education and school psychology. Those experiences have been valuable and imperative to my future as a school psychologist. During the spring semester of my first year in the program, CSULB's School Psychology program provided students with a meeting of different leaders present representing various school districts around CSULB. During that meeting, I obtained the necessary contact information from the local schools where I wanted to be a practicum student. Shortly after that meeting, I simply called the schools I was interested in and spoke to the program directors. The schools had me submit a resume and a letter of intent. A couple weeks later, I was offered a position as a practicum student at the school I desired.

To the first year school psychology students, my advice is to do whatever you can to attend the practicum student meeting in the Spring Semester and make sure to take thorough notes. Good luck.

---Joan Kim---

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **DECEMBER 4 - SPSA MEETING AT EL TORRITO**
- **DECEMBER 6-8 - CASP CONFERENCE IN LONG BEACH**
- **DECEMBER 8 – SPSA HOLIDAY PARTY AT LORI WORKMAN AND VEERA SIDHWA’S HOUSE
129 2ND STREET
SEAL BEACH, CA 90740**
- **FEBRUARY 6-9 – NASP ANNUAL CONVENTION IN NEW ORLEANS**