



Psychology Department Newsletter Fall 2021

In this Issue

DelVal's 14th President	1
Applying to DelVal's Graduate Program	2
What is Truth?	2
New Book on Student Success	3
Congratulations!	3
Spotlight: Lauren Bittner	4
New Advisor for the Psychology Club	4

DelVal's 14th President



DelVal has announced the selection of its fourteenth president- Dr. Benjamin Rusiloski. He has been a member of the DelVal community since 1994, when he first joined the faculty as an assistant professor of chemistry. Since then, he has continued to serve as a dean, vice president of academic affairs and dean of the faculty, and interim president. Rusiloski also led the development and implementation of the Experience360 program.

Rusiloski's passion for experiential learning is mirrored in the emphasis in the counseling world. In the mental health profession, counselors must utilize the emotional self in the service of supporting change in others. Teaching such a skill can be challenging.

At DelVal, thanks to the assistance of Rusiloski and others, we're able to develop this skillset in unique and meaningful ways. Our campus counseling lab contains state-of-the art audio/visual equipment to support students' learning. Outside the classroom, undergraduates further develop their skills through the Experience360 program, while graduate students experience field placement in clinical practica and internships. This holistic approach to education fosters deeper learning.

Rusiloski believes the way DelVal can grow is through engagement of and including the community both "big and small communities," as this is what makes up Delaware Valley University. We're excited to continue to grow under the leadership of our new president. Congratulations, President Rusiloski!

Applying to DelVal's Graduate Program



DelVal's master's degree program in counseling psychology helps train mental health professionals. The program is accredited by the MPCAC. It offers two specializations- one in child and adolescent counseling and the other in social justice community counseling. Students work directly with Mr. Chris Walter, our clinical coordinator, to ensure they receive strong clinical experience in the field.

Students enter the program, bringing a wide variety of experiences and expertise. "I expected this program to be life-changing, and I have not been disappointed! As a nontraditional student coming back to an academic setting after 20 years – and completely shifting professional gears – DelVal's Graduate Psychology program has lived up to its promise to 'meet me where I am.' Our multigenerational cohort blends students from diverse backgrounds and with a wide range of life experiences, and our professors hold space for all perspectives, making our classroom discussions lively, illuminating and stimulating," says Jen Wielgus, Class of 2024.

If you are interested in applying to the Graduate Counseling Psychology Program or would like to explore the program at DelVal, please visit: <https://delval.edu/programs/graduate-programs/counseling-psychology-ma>. Any questions can be submitted through this website.

What is Truth?

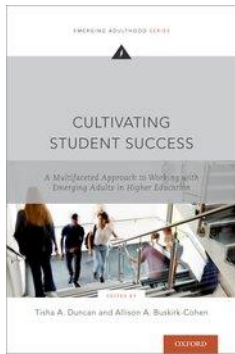


As part of the Question It, Change It colloquium series, Dr. Alaina Brenick led a virtual discussion on how children and adolescents learn about truth. Brenick is a scholar-activist at the University of Connecticut who examines how youth develop an understanding of intergroup conflict, including prejudice, discrimination, and victimization. She is committed to translating her work into practice, through the creation of intervention programs.

The event began with a brief presentation of Brenick's research, followed by a conversation with audience members facilitated by Psychology Department Chair, Dr. Allison Buskirk-Cohen. The Diversity Committee at Newtown Friends School co-sponsored the event. Over 40 people were in attendance. "I was fascinated by Dr. Brenick's talk at the annual B + H Colloquium. Her clear, concise way of explaining her research made the presentation inviting and comprehensible for all who attended. I was hooked right from the beginning," enthused Jessie Schulman, Class of 2022.

Stay tuned for more events this coming Spring 2022 semester!

New Book on Student Success



Dr. Allison Buskirk-Cohen, professor and chair of the Psychology Department, has just released a book with Oxford University Press, entitled, *Cultivating Student Success: A Multifaceted Approach to Working with Emerging Adults in Higher Education*. The book provides an accessible resource for administrators, faculty, and staff in higher education.

Buskirk-Cohen and her co-editor, Dr. Tisha Duncan, identified a need for this book, which integrates a development lens with a practical application of research in higher education. Most college students do not view themselves as adults, yet no longer see themselves as adolescents, either. This “in between” phase is termed emerging adulthood by researchers. Bringing together diverse perspectives from 20 unique scholars, Buskirk-Cohen and Duncan offer a holistic collection of practices to work with emerging adults academically, socially, and emotionally.

The collaboration of Buskirk-Cohen and Duncan began 10 years ago, when they met at an interdisciplinary teaching conference. They shared professional interests and many commonalities in their personal lives. “Everyone needs someone who can support, encourage, and inspire them. I’m lucky to consider Dr. Duncan both a friend and colleague,” said Buskirk-Cohen. She continued, “Relationships help foster success- for everyone!”

Congratulations!



Dr. Matthew Mutchler, associate professor, has been elected Chair of the Pennsylvania Association for Marriage & Family Therapists (PAMFT). The organization is dedicated to the growth of the profession and professional practice. It looks to enhance the professional development of marriage and family therapists throughout their career, promoting licensure and continued education, fostering regional networking, and modeling career and practice development opportunities.

“I’ve been involved with PAMFT for the past 3 years, having served as the board secretary before becoming chair-elect. It’s an honor to serve my profession in this capacity and I look forward to continued advocacy for the master’s-level health practitioners in PA,” says Mutchler. He sees connections between the social-justice orientation that drives the DelVal psychology programs and the mission of the PAMFT.

Among other events, PAMFT will host an online conference on social justice in the practice of family therapy in March 2022. The day-long conference will feature Philadelphia’s Dr. George James (a past GCP Speaker Series presenter) and other practicing clinicians discussing the ways clinicians can create healing spaces for marginalized clients and practice advocacy in their day-to-day careers.

Spotlight: Lauren Bittner



Ms. Lauren Bittner, an adjunct professor, in the counseling psychology program finds innovative ways to integrate her real-world counseling experience with students in Introduction to Psychology. Bittner runs a private practice and supervises professionals working to fulfill their licensed professional counseling (LPC) requirements. She recently completed basic training for Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) treatment and is seeing powerful results in helping heal trauma survivors. Bittner has been teaching students in the dual-enrollment program at Lansdale Catholic High School.

Bittner values making the learning process fun! For example, when discussing sensation and perception, students were placed in pairs and had one person view an abstract art piece and describe it to their partner whose back was to the artwork. The student viewing the artwork had to practice relaying information about the piece so that the student facing away could recreate the artwork in a drawing. Through this activity, they learned about the challenges of relaying sensory information in addition to the brain's perception of the information received. Creative and hands-on learning is an integral part of the DelVal experience. We can't wait to see what comes next.

New Advisor for the Psychology Club



This past semester, Dr. Brianna Morgis became the new advisor of the Psychology Club on campus. Morgis currently teaches Introduction to Psychology and Social Psychology & Human Interaction, where she has had the opportunity to share her passion for and fascination with the mind with her students. She and Psych Club President, Leah Sitar, have joined forces and are hoping to get more students involved in the club this spring, both on and off campus.

They are looking for members who would like to be a part of a creative and accepting group and an asset to the Del Val community. Student members can expect to be involved in campus and local community events and fundraisers, such as the Suicide Prevention Walk and t-shirt fundraiser that took place this past fall. Proceeds from the club's fundraiser will be going to the American Foundation of Suicide Prevention. The plan is to participate in more events like these next semester, but the club needs YOUR ideas!

If you value mental health, find psychology interesting, and want to get more involved in the Del Val community, then Psych Club is for you! For students interested in joining, please contact Leah Sitar for more information (sitarlr7969@delval.edu).