



## PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT NEWSLETTER FALL 2020



### Letter from the Chair

Hello DelVal Psychology students, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends!

It certainly has been an unusual year here at DelVal. Between pandemics, tornados, and presidential elections, there has been a lot to deal with. As you'll see throughout our newsletter, though, our department's faculty, staff, students, and alumni have continued to work with determination and to let our values of advocacy, connection, and service shine.

When DelVal was forced to close campus due to pandemic safety restrictions, we learned quickly how to move our courses online, and got creative about having our "hands on" approach from a distance. We have all become Zoom experts, willingly or not! We've also become well-versed in delivering distance counseling – new area for our practicing faculty and staff members. At each turn, we focused on how we could use the *thrown situation* of the pandemic to inform and enhance our teaching and mentoring. From talking to our students, it seems like it worked!

In the midst of all this, we graduated our 5<sup>th</sup> cohort of M.A. students and an ever-growing number of undergraduates. We welcomed a new faculty member – Dr. Brianna Morgis – to our department. We moved our Speaker Series online and helped build the first annual College of Business and Humanities "Question it, Change it!" colloquium. Our students and alumni have been busy, too – they continued their practica, internships, research and early careers with gusto!

I hope you enjoy reading about what has been going on this fall. Many thanks to Lisa Schell, Psych Department Graduate Assistant, for her hard work on this semester's newsletter.

Thanks so much to ALL the Psychology Department students, faculty, and staff for your hard work over these past few months. Take care of yourselves!

Slow & Easy,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matt Mutchler".

Matt Mutchler, Ph.D., LMFT  
Acting Psychology Department Chair

## Undergraduate Voices



(From left to right: Madison Bernacki, Ashlyne Carman, Alicia Kelly, Sarah Young, Sha Gonzalez)

In the midst of a pandemic, affecting every country worldwide, we wanted to know how our DelVal undergraduates were experiencing their education in these unprecedented times. We asked some of our counseling psychology majors what their experiences have been like throughout 2020. Each student agreed unequivocally that the “close relationship with their professors”, that felt like a mentorship, was the best thing about their education at DelVal. They tell us that this mentorship has given them a supportive space where they could grow as students and citizens of the world. They share a feeling that the “integrity of the program” remained intact through the use of some in-person courses, online video platforms, hybrid, and 100% virtual options” during the pandemic.

Sarah Young (PY 2021), President for the Athletic Student Advisory Committee, has enjoyed the opportunities to be a part of the NCAA online convention while at DelVal and interning at the YMCA to fulfill her E360 requirements and gain experience in the field. Alicia Kelly (PY 2022) loves the “relaxing and calm surrounding” DelVal’s campus has created for her while studying and is looking forward to her future internships. Ashlyn Carman (PY 2021), Vice President for the Soccer Club, has enjoyed volunteering to be mock clients for DelVal’s Graduate Counseling Psychology students while gaining first-hand experience in what it is like to be in the graduate program at the University. Sha Gonzalez (PY 2022), Vice President for Public Relations of the Student Programming Board, is enjoying her “on-the-job experience” at DelVal by making connections with students and staff. Madison Bernacki (PY 2023), is currently enjoying her opportunity, after assistance with connecting with internship opportunities from professors at DelVal, by gaining experience in counseling and mindfulness practices through a counseling yoga studio.

Though all students have been impacted by changes in learning formats and their college experiences may be different than anticipated, our DelVal Psychology students have shown perseverance and flexibility. Working together, our students, faculty, and staff have been able to maintain a high-quality educational and mentorship environment. Great work, everybody!

## Alumni in Action

**Meg Clawson** (GCP 2020) has been hired by Airmid Wellness & Counseling Center and Yoga Studio, where she completed her M.A. Practicum and Internship. She spoke about her experience while at DelVal and how it has prepared her in her current role as a master's level counselor working towards her license. Ms. Clawson sees clients of all ages, and particularly focused on work with children and adolescents. Her experience at DelVal and in her early career gave her first-hand experience in a counselor role that went on to allow her to serve in our community when disaster hit.



After a tornado roared through Doylestown on August 4, 2020, Ms. Clawson recognized that affected children would need a place to process their frightening experience. She took the initiative to create a children's counseling group that combined a trauma informed perspective and play therapy. Meg credits her experiences at DelVal and at Airmid with helping her develop the "knowledge and skill set" to use her expertise to give back to the community.

While studying at DelVal Ms. Clawson focused on the program's child and adolescent track where she enjoyed courses that dove into subjects such as life-span development, child psychopathology, and trauma. Through her work, Meg is carrying forth the DelVal Psychology values of community connection and service.

## Welcome Dr. Briana Morgis



The Psychology Department is thrilled to introduce Dr. Briana Morgis. A Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist, she holds a PhD from Drexel in Couple and Family Therapy and a MA in Couple and Family Therapy from Thomas Jefferson University. She earned a BS from Penn State University with a major in human development and family studies & a minor in sociology. In her private practice, Dr. Morgis emphasizes connection and positive relationships in all her work while focusing on helping individuals, couples, and families correct negative patterns of interaction. Dr. Morgis was an adjunct faculty member in our BA and MA programs before joining the faculty full-time. She is already off to a strong start – building on student relationships she forged over the past 2 years and building new ones this semester. You'll find Dr. Morgis teaching many courses, including Personality Theories (PY), Family Dynamics (PY), Group Counseling (GCP), and Practicum Seminar (GCP).

Please join us in welcoming Dr. Briana Morgis to the DelVal family!

## Colloquium on Racism: Question it! Change it!



QUESTION IT! CHANGE IT!

Business & Humanities Colloquium: 2020-2021

This year, the DelVal College of Business and Humanities launched our first annual “Question it, Change it!” Colloquium. The colloquium runs the entire academic year with new modules hosted by College faculty members every two weeks. This year’s topic is “Racism in the United States.” Fall module topics have covered a range of topics and have featured engaging webinars, videos, and readings. Dr. Audrey Ervin hosted a module on White Privilege in October, and Dr. Matt Mutchler will host a module on the social-ecosystemic impact of racism on individuals and families in December. The colloquium is open to all DelVal faculty, students, and staff through Blackboard. We hope to open it to community members in the future.

### Dr. Tania Israel Delivers Campus Wide Keynote



In October 2020, Tania Israel spoke to students, faculty & staff across campus and affiliated community partners on “Bridging the Political Divide: Optimism for Moving Beyond Polarization” via a webinar. Tania Israel is a Psychologist, Professor, and Community Organizer in the Department of Counseling, Clinical, and School Psychology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She holds a Ph.D. in Counseling Psychology and is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association. Dr. Israel teaches about helping skills, leadership, and community collaboration, among other things.

As the author of *Beyond Your Bubble: How to Connect Across the Political Divide, Skills and Strategies for Conversations That Work* (APA, 2020) Dr. Israel’s skill-building workshop was developed and delivered to hundreds of participants following the 2016 election.

This event, hosted by the Presidential Commission on Diversity & Inclusion at Delaware Valley University, came at a time where there was political polarization and Dr. Tania offered evidence/research-based skills and strategies to bridge political divides.

We are thankful here at Delaware Valley University for this successful event and are honored that Dr. Israel could deliver this important message heading into the November presidential election.

## Students & Research

At DeVal, we embrace the scientist-practitioner model. We encourage our students to both learn the skills and theories of counseling psychology and to engage in research that helps propel the field forward. Read below to see the various projects our undergraduate and graduate students are working on!

**Lisa Schell** (PY 2019, GCP 2022) is working with Dr. Allison Buskirk-Cohen on a study about “Making Research Personal.” In her role as research assistant, Ms. Schell assisted in creating



surveys, gathering, organizing data related to the research, interviewing, and putting together supporting documents linking and highlighting other researchers involved in this project. “This truly has been an amazing experience that has created a trust in research for me that I feel, will help me in becoming a change agent within a social justice role.” In this role, Ms. Schell shared that she has “Learned in-depth understanding in what makes research consistent for all evidence-based practices within psychology.”

**Alison Teter** (PY 2018, GCP 2022) is working with Dr. Matt Mutchler studying counselor development relating to counseling self-efficacy and the impostor phenomenon. Their longitudinal study will follow GCP student through the program and monitor how their experiences change their senses of self-as-counselors. They had planned to launch the study in Spring of 2020, but the COVID-19 pandemic has pushed the launch to January 2021.

**Jocelyn Balan** (PY 2020, GCP 2023) is working with Drs. Buskirk-Cohen & Mutchler studying the role of compassion fatigue and compassion satisfaction in higher education faculty. They collected data from a national sample of educators and are currently submitting their manuscript to peer reviewed journals for possible publication. Portions of this research have been presented at the International Society for the Exploration of Teaching & Learning (ISETL) and the Association for Psychological Science (APS).



**Alexis Sideris** (PY 2020) completed a Student Research project as part of her E360



requirements. Working with Dr. Mutchler, she studied changes in student anxiety and safety behaviors during the pandemic. She collected data each week and tracked the changes over time. While the sample size was not large enough to draw any major conclusions, data showed a trend of anxiety decreasing through the course of the semester. She and Dr. Mutchler conjecture that settling into the routine of school life may have helped ease anxiety symptoms. The research was presented virtually as part of the Student Research Program on November 30. Alexis says, "Researching anxiety during COVID-19 has allowed me to broaden my knowledge about student anxiety and how it functions daily, especially during a global pandemic. I am now more prepared in my field and have learned a lot about the research process thanks to the student research done here at DeVal."

## Undergraduate Degree Ranked in Top 25



The Bachelor's Degree Center has ranked the Counseling Psychology B.A. as one of the top 25 Counseling Bachelor's Degrees in the nation. The BDC builds their rankings based on metrics such as student satisfaction and potential salary. In their writeup about our program, they state that we are "one of the best counseling degrees in the marketplace." You can read the whole listing at <https://www.bachelorsdegreecenter.org/best-counseling-degrees/>

## Got News?

If you are a graduate of one (or both!) of our degree programs and have news to share, let us know! We'd like to feature our alumni in upcoming editions of this newsletter and we're interested in what you've been up to since leaving DelVal. Career, family, or interesting personal news items are all welcome!

Reach out to our department's Graduate Assistant – Lisa Schell – at [lisa.schell@delval.edu](mailto:lisa.schell@delval.edu) or to Dr. Mutchler at [matthew.mutchler@delval.edu](mailto:matthew.mutchler@delval.edu). We hope to hear from you soon!



Psych club window display at the student center for Homecoming 2020



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