

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ASSOCIATION

Newsletter | Summer 2019

Volume 7, Issue 1



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A Message from the SPSA President

Dear students and friends,

The School Psychology Student Association (SPSA) had a very successful 2018-2019 year! We, along with our amazing Executive Board: Carolina Burgos (Vice President), Byron Garcia (Treasurer), Keila Tuckler (Secretary), and Heidi Zetina (Events Chair) organized several events throughout the year to bring members together, develop professionally, enhance knowledge, advocate, and raise awareness about the school psychology profession and social justice. SPSA allows students to build positive relationships with one another,

learn from one another, and spend time together. SPSA helps organize events that allow students to network while also building supportive relationships with students and colleagues.

One aspect that makes SPSA unique is the diversity within our students. With diverse cultural backgrounds, various work experiences, and different personalities we all come together to collaborate and learn from one another. This year SPSA was able to offer our students many opportunities, some of them being: private practice discussion with Dr. Monica Oganés, volunteering at the Little Lighthouse Foundation, discussion on how we can promote the educational success of refugees and immigrants and attending FASP and NASP conferences. Lastly, we were able to come together at our end of the year banquet in BRIO to celebrate our students and 2019 graduates (Munirah, Diana, and Bianca)!

Being part of this year's executive board has been an amazing experience. It gave me the opportunity to be involved with my peers, develop a friendship with the executive board, and help build my leadership skills. It has been an overall great experience and I strongly encourage incoming students to become a part of SPSA and the executive board! I am confident that the incoming executive board will continue fulfilling SPSA's mission. We wish you all the best of luck during the semesters to come. Thank you to everyone that contributed into making this year as amazing as it was!

Sincerely,
Shantel Gomez



Cumming, M., Bettini, E., Smith, S., & Pham, A. V. (2018, November). *Preparing educational professionals to address disruptive behavior in middle school*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Teacher Education Division of the Council for Exceptional Children, Las Vegas, NV.

Garcia, B., Lopez, J., Gutierrez, B., McNeely, M., Lazarus, P. J., & Pham, A. V. (2019, February). *The development of a social justice committee within a school psychology program*. Poster presented at the annual convention of the Trainers of School Psychologists, Atlanta, GA.

Lazarus, P. & Costa, A. (2018, October). *Facilitating emotional self-regulation in children and youth*. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Florida Association of School Psychologists, Orlando, FL.

Lazarus, P. & Costa, A. (2018, October). *Fostering emotional self-regulation in children*. Poster presented at the annual convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Atlanta, GA.

Lazarus, P., Poland, S., Zenera, F. J., Kennedy-Paine, C. G., Lieberman, R. A., & Pfohl, W. (2019, February). *Twenty year of schools shootings - So what have we learned?* Symposium presented at the annual convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Atlanta, GA.

McNeely, M., & Pelaez, M. (May, 2018). Increasing Eye Contact and Reading Comprehension in Children with Autism. In R. Coddling (Chair), poster presented at the *Association for Behavior Analysis International 44th Annual Convention*, San Diego, CA.

Myles, D., Lawrence, C., & Pham, A. (2019, February). *Arab American students' cultural barriers in US schools*. Practitioner conversation panel presented at the annual convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Atlanta, GA.

Myles, D., Pham, A., & Pelaez, M. (May, 2018). Sign language discrimination training for teaching social referencing skills. In D. Greer (Chair), poster presented at the annual convention of the *Association for Behavior Analysis International 44th Annual Convention*, San Diego, CA.

Salum, C. & Pham, A. (2019, February). *Individualizing RTI for struggling readers by incorporating executive functioning data*. Poster session presented at the annual convention of the National Association of School Psychologists, Atlanta, GA.



BARNES & NOBLE AT FSU

BOOKSTORE

BOOKSTORE

BOOKSTORE

FSU
BOOKS

FSU
BOOKS

FSU
BOOKS

FSU
BOOKS

FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“Regulate Yourself! The Science of Cognition, Emotion & Behavior”
October 24 – 27, 2018



THE CONFERENCE

The 2018 Annual FASP Conference took place at the Omni Orlando Resort at Championsgate in Central Florida. The conference is geared to provide school psychologists and students with tools, ideas, interventions, and strategies to improve their practice outcomes. Some of the learning strands were creating safe and supportive schools, fostering students' mental health, and reducing school violence.

The conference included:

- ⚙ A keynote address from the world renowned ADHD expert, Dr. Russell Barkley, “The Second Attention Disorder: Sluggish Cognitive Tempo versus ADHD.”
- ⚙ An opening address from Dr. Marc Brackett, founding director of The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence, “Emotional Intelligence: From Theory to Programs to Systemic Change.”
- ⚙ A Town Hall Meeting, chaired by Dr. Lazarus, consisting of a number of panelists from different professions and victims/parents of the Parkland shooting who offered their unique perspective on the issues impacting our nation's schools in the wake of the horrific school shootings that have occurred within the past two decades.
- ⚙ Student Social at local restaurant, Miller Ale House.

THE CSFI BASKET

Each year, conference participants are asked to create and donate a basket for FASP to auction at their conference. All proceeds go to FASP's Children's Services Fund, Inc. (CSFI). CSFI is an organization that collects donations and funnels them to families and charitable organizations in need. Since 1999, they have donated over \$100,000.

FIU's basket was “Fall” themed and contained everything you would need for a comfy night in!

There were multiple bidders but it ultimately sold to FIU's program director, Dr. Lazarus, who loved it so much that he had to take it home himself!



Student Attendees:

Joelishia Banfield | Carolina Burgos | Juan Carlos Chavarriga | Quennie Dong | Tara Fitzgerald | Byron Garcia | Shantel Gomez | Chelsea Lawrence
Diana Myles | Ashra Noble | Alexandria Pipitone Schworn

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS ANNUAL CONVENTION

“Unlock Your Potential: Prevention is Key”
February 26 – March 1, 2019



THE ROAST

NASP regularly hosts a “Past President’s Roast” at their annual conventions. As NASP’s 43rd President, Dr. Lazarus, was the honoree for this year’s event!



THE CONVENTION

The 2019 Annual NASP Convention took place at the Hyatt Regency and Marriot Marquis in Atlanta, Georgia. The Convention drew over 5,200 attendees from around the world who participated in over 1,200 educational sessions on a variety of topics.

Students have the opportunity to:

- ⚙️ Get help securing their first job or internship with career-related sessions.
- ⚙️ Meet with on-site mentors matched through the Convention Mentor Program.
- ⚙️ Talk to NASP staff members about memberships, advocacy, and credentials.
- ⚙️ Present sessions and posters.



Student Attendees:

Juan Carlos Chavarriga | Byron Garcia | Bianca Gutierrez | Chelsea Lawrence | Johanna Lopez | Luciana Lorino | Diana Myles | Heidi Zetina



School Psychology Student Association

The mission of the School Psychology Student Association (SPSA) is to advocate for the School Psychology profession, along with the children and families we will ultimately serve. We come together to enhance the students' experience by providing opportunities for networking, professional development, leadership, and service. It is open to all FIU students, staff, administrators, and alumni who unite to promote their common interests.

SPSA EVENTS

- Story Hour at Little Lighthouse Foundation - October 9th
- Resume/CV Workshop - October 15th
- FIU Football Game - October 20th
- Social Justice Podcast - November 19th
- Thanksgiving Potluck - November 19th
- Jeopardy Game with the Speech Pathology Association - February 20th
- Private Practice Discussion with Monica Oganés - April 17th
- BRIO Banquet - April 27th



SPSA ELECTED E-BOARD



QUENNIE DONG
President

SPSA has been a great experience during my first year because of its welcoming environment where we were able to learn from each other and build lasting friendships.



CARLOS CHAVARRIGA
Vice President

In SPSA, I enjoy building professional relationships and life long friendships with others passionate about the work we do and the lives we impact. Together we can all be leaders in the field and contribute to the schools and students we serve.



BYRON GARCIA
Treasurer

My favorite part of being a part of SPSA is the opportunity to collaborate with a diverse group of students and professionals that share a common interest. It's an opportunity for me to be involved in activities and discussions that fall under the umbrella of School Psychology, while acquiring knowledge that is related to the field. It's also just fun to be involved =)



RENEE BASTIAN
Secretary

I love that SPSA provides students in the program the chance to network with each other and meet people that they might not have class with, share ideas that can help advance our field, and give us experience to better ourselves.



TARA FITZGERALD
CSO Representative

I enjoy being a member of SPSA because we build a sense of community in the School Psych program. We can all work together towards mutually established goals



STUDENT LEADERS & AWARDS

Quennie Dong → SPSA President-Elect

Shantel Gomez → SPSA President

Lakeshia McFarland → Student Resilience Award:
Recognized for her “grit” and resilience

Munirah McNeely → CASE Graduate Student Award in
Academic Achievement

Diana Myles → Patty del Valle Humanitarian Award

Alexandria Pipitone Schworn → FASP Student
Representative

Keila Tuckler → NASP Student Representative

Meet the First Years



SARAH ABULKHEIR
Birthplace: South Florida

B.S. in Early Childhood
Education: Early Childhood
Development, Florida
International University

Interests: Going to the gym, watching TV, and reading for leisure.

Why School Psych?

I am passionate about education and passionate about uplifting children into achieving their dreams and goals. I have always been interested in studying psychology, learning about shared perspectives and how aspects of our lives can influence us internally. I'd like to be a champion in helping children and adolescents build a positive outlook on their lives so they can better develop academically, socially, and emotionally.



ALEXANDRA ARANGO
Birthplace: Cartagena, Colombia

B.S. in Psychology,
University of Florida

Interests: Reading, playing tennis, roller skating, swimming, watching movies and shows

Why School Psych?

Because I want to make sure that children are given the opportunity to thrive



RACHEL CASANAS
Birthplace: Cuba

A.A. in Psychology,
Miami-Dade College
B.A. in Psychology,
Florida International University

Interests: Roller skating, listening to music, going to the beach, and watching movies

Why School Psych?

I aspire to make a difference for students of all backgrounds. As well as, being a person who can serve as an advocate, and a safe space for a diverse number of students, no matter their circumstances. I can see myself guiding students through their academic, behavioral, and social/emotional endeavors. I know the importance of motivating students that face daily challenges. Thus, through this profession I will be able to address numerous issues in time, to ultimately promote more positive behavior and student success in schools.



ALEXIS DAVIS

Birthplace: St. Petersburg, FL

B.A. in Psychology,
Education minor

Interests: Fiction writing, hanging out with friends, and listening to music

Why School Psych?

I wanted to combine my love for Psychology and children into a fulfilling career



ISABEL GUARAGNA

Birthplace: Miami, FL

B.A. in Psychology
Education Minor
Florida International University

Interests: Cheerleading, working out, and going to the beach.

Why School Psych?

I love the idea of collaborating with multiple people to see a child reach their full potential!



ATHENA MAVRAKIS

Birthplace: Portland, OR

B.S. in Psychology,
University of Florida
M. ED in Ed Psychology,
Florida Atlantic University

Interests: Traveling, finding and listening to new music, and cooking Greek food

Why School Psych?

My personal professional goal is to make an impact on mapping young individuals path towards independence and mental/educational stability.



CRISTINE ERICE-RAYMOND

Birthplace: Miami Beach, Florida

B.S. in Exceptional Student
Education, Miami Dade College
M.S. in Special Education, Florida
International University

Interests: Going to the beach, boating, and traveling

Why School Psych?

Upon completing the program, I hope to have a more profound impact on the special education population, more knowledge in the field of psychology, and the skills to assess students, so they have the tools to become lifelong learners.



ASHLEY HANSON

Birthplace: Susanville, CA

B.A. in Psychology,
California State University, Chico

Interests: Photography

Why School Psych?

I want to become a School Psychologist to be able to make a lasting and helpful difference in children's lives.



MATTHEW NETTINA

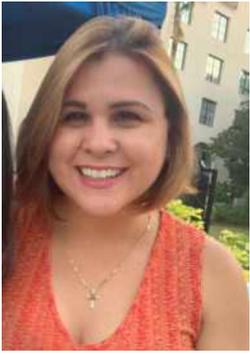
Birthplace: Hollywood, FL

B.S. in Elementary Education
B.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies
Psychology Minor
Florida International University

Interests: Going to the beach, watching movies, and working out.

Why School Psych?

I was drawn to school psychology through being a teacher and seeking a more interesting and more fulfilling line of work



IBIS MENDOZA

Birthplace: Habana, Cuba

B.A. in Elementary Ed.,
Florida International University
M.S. in Urban Education
Florida International University

Interests: Working out, doing obstacle races like the Spartan race.

Why School Psych?

After being in the education field for 22 years and having worked with so many different types of students. I see a need for children to be properly diagnosed. Having an autistic child and sitting on the other side of the table as a parent, I can relate to the many emotions and issues that emerge in those very intense meetings. I want to help in solving the mystery of why a student is having difficulty learning. I would love to see a child improve their self image and grow knowing they they have value, and they are important. I truly believe that this is how when change the world.



EUGENIA PILAR ROMERO

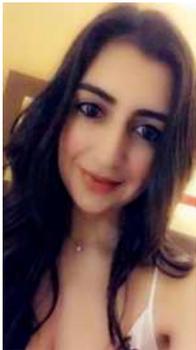
Birthplace: San Jose, Costa Rica

B.A. in Psychology,
Florida International University

Interests: Exercising, dancing flamenco, and learning Italian

Why School Psych?

I've been teaching English in Spain for the past two years in elementary schools. I saw how important the role for a school psychologist is for students and felt like I could make a difference in the future.



LISETTE SANZ

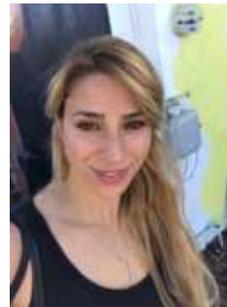
Birthplace: Miami, Florida

Associates from Miami-Dade College
Bachelor's Degree from Florida International University

Interests: Attending dance and yoga classes, reading murder mysteries, going fishing with her family, and traveling with her friends.

Why School Psych?

I would like to become a school psychologist for the sole reason of making a positive and lasting difference in a child's life. I would like to offer my services in order to prevent mental health problems and promote positive behaviors; as well as to provide support to encourage academic, social and emotional success.



DENISSE TETTAMANTI

Birthplace: Miami, Florida

B.S. in Elementary Education,
Florida International University

Interests: Dancing, doing yoga, swimming, working out, and attending social gatherings.

Why School Psych?

I want to become a School Psychologist to be able to help students identify the proper services they need to further assist them access the school curriculum and the world around them. I want to help ensure there is emotional health and safety in schools. I want to become a School Psychologist because I want to be able to make the world a better place for everyone.



Alex got married in Coconut Grove, FL last November!



After graduation, Bianca went on an Alaskan cruise!



Keila went on a Greek Isles Cruise!



Chelsea played in a volleyball tournament in Jamaica in March!



Milagros traveled to Los Angeles, California!





OUR SPRING 2019 GRADUATES

All 3 graduates passed the Praxis exam!

Bianca Gutierrez

Bianca is currently working part time on developmentally delayed and gifted cases in Dade County. She took the Praxis School Psychologist test and plans to apply for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential.

She has been offered positions in Dade and Palm Beach school districts and is still deciding which one she will pursue.

Munirah McNeely

Munirah passed the Praxis School Psychologist test and she also applied for NCSP and was accepted!

She joined the Illinois School Psychology Association board as the Technology Co-chair which will begin in August. And she is looking forward to starting as a full time school psych at Evanston Township High School, where she completed her internship.

Diana Myles-Mitchell

Diana passed the Praxis School Psychologist test and plans to apply for the Nationally Certified School Psychologist (NCSP) credential.

She will be working part-time with Dade county this summer and she is truly excited to announce that she was recently offered the alternative education school psych position with Dade county!



A STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

MUNIRAH'S INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

Over the past year, I have had the opportunity of working at Evanston Township High School in Evanston, Illinois. The school has 3,700 economically and racially diverse students. To match it, the staff of nearly 500 adults is equally as diverse in race and backgrounds. This level of diversity is one of the many great aspects of this school. When I am in a room discussing a student, most often than not, there is someone in the room who mirrors the cultural and racial background of the student, making our decisions more culturally competent.

Within the Student Services department, there are 4 full-time school psychologists, 4 school psychologist interns, 8 full-time social workers (4 dedicated to gen ed students and 4 dedicated to special education students), 8 social work interns, 14 counselors, 1 substance abuse counselor, 1 post-hospitalization program clinician. While there is a wealth of mental health resources at the school, the days are still jammed packed with eligibility meetings, MTSS meetings, risk assessments, and testing. Each grade level has a team that will follow the students throughout their time at ETHS. For example, I began this year working with freshman, and next year I will work with sophomores. This allows the school to provide consistent support to our students.

The collaborative effort of the school has been my favorite part. No decision is made in a silo allowing multiple data points and voices to weigh in on how to best support our students. The most challenging part of the role is that there is still a population of students with whom it is difficult to reach due to resources, but the school truly does all that it can to provide equitable support to students in need. --->

Heading into this internship, I wasn't sure what to expect. I didn't know what the workload would be, or the support that I would get from my supervisor. However, it has been great overall. I have only had to bring work home with me twice. I have completed roughly 20 evaluations. My supervisor has provided me with support, while also giving me the independence to manage my day and workload. I have had the opportunity to participate in school-wide suicide assessments, in rolling out MTSS programming, leading weekly groups, participating weekly in a social skills group for our students on the spectrum and leading executive functioning workshops for our freshmen students. I am happy to say that FIU prepared me to tackle it all. I had more WISC training than most of the other interns (Thanks, Dr. Pham!).

As you head into internship year, I recommend you to think about the following:

- How many evaluations does your supervisor expect for you to do?
- When will you get to do an evaluation completely on your own?
- What professional development or leadership opportunities are available for you?
- What are the MTSS and PBIS processes that the school has in place? What role will you take within these processes?
- Does the school have a diversity of test kits that you can use when working with students or do they use the same handful of assessments?
- What is the diversity of the staff and of the students?

Best of luck as you head into this next chapter! Do not be afraid to use your voice to ensure that your internship experience will provide you with the necessary tools to become a competent psychologist. This also entails making sure that you have a manageable workload so that you don't become overwhelmed.

You are a Panther and any school is lucky to have you!

STUDENT'S HEADING OFF TO INTERSHIP THIS FALL!

Denisse Acosta (Miami-Dade County Public Schools)

Carolina Burgos (Broward County Public Schools)

Alexandra Ewing (School District of Palm Beach County)

Shantel Gomez (Miami-Dade County Public Schools)

Chelsea Lawrence (Hillsborough County Public Schools)

Luciana Lorino (Miami-Dade County Public Schools)

Lakeshia McFarland (Miami-Dade County Public Schools)

Ashra Noble (Duval County Public Schools)

Program Alumni

What are they up to now?



Rita Barrios

Spring 2002 Graduate
Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL
17 years working in the field

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Working collaboratively with the group of professionals at my school to help the students as best as we can.

From your experiences, what's one piece of advice you can give to current graduate students in the program?

I recommend that they take the time to shadow those in the job for a few days so they can better understand what the job truly entails. Each day is different and what you may have planned for that day may not work out. You need to be dynamic and flexible to change at a minutes notice.

Gema Santana

Spring 2008 Graduate
Miami-Dade County Public Schools, FL
11 years working in the field

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy being able to help parents and teachers understand the child's strength and weaknesses in order for them to achieve their academic, social and emotional goals.

From your experiences, what's one piece of advice you can give to current graduate students in the program?

As a school psychologist decisions are made for children and always keep in mind that your work and recommendations matter in order to help the children be as successful as they can. You have the power!!!







PROGRAM FACULTY



Dr. Lazarus glider flying into Switzerland for the ISPA Conference with Benny

Dr. Philip Lazarus

Program Director &
Core Faculty

philaz1@aol.com

Dr. Lazarus has served as the Director of the School Psychology Program for over 40 years and his primary responsibility is to train school psychologists to work in the schools. He is the author or editor of four books including: *Psychoeducational Evaluation of Children and Adolescents with Low-Incidence Handicaps*; *Best Practices in School Crisis Prevention and Intervention*; *Creating Safe and Supportive Schools and Fostering Students' Mental Health* and the upcoming *Fostering the Emotional Well-Being of Youth: A School-Based Approach*. He is a Past President of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). He is licensed as both a psychologist and school psychologist in the state of Florida. Dr. Lazarus is a founder and Past-Chairperson of the National Emergency Assistance Team of

the NASP. This team has provided direct crisis assistance in the aftermath of more than a dozen tragic school shootings. Dr. Lazarus led the NASP crisis response in Mississippi and Louisiana where he provided crisis intervention training in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina and Rita and he also led the team in the Gulf Coast in the response to the gulf oil spill disaster. He has also maintained a private practice for 30 years. He specializes in working with children, adolescents and families. His practice encompasses assessment, therapy and consultation with troubled youth and their families. Dr. Lazarus has dealt with schools and communities that have been involved with trauma such and loss of life and has provided therapy and assessment following bus accidents impacting two communities in both Florida and Texas. He consulted with the Federal Bureau of Investigation in their landmark study on profiling school shooters and has worked on school violence prevention and bullying prevention for National Catholic Risk Retention Group, Inc and VIRTUS®. Dr. Lazarus has been interviewed by a number of news sources such as the CNBC, CNN, the Glenn Beck Show, Newsweek, Seventeen Magazine, Washington Post, Reader's Digest, and has appeared on numerous radio talk shows dealing with such topics as depression in children, anxiety in children and adolescents, responding to natural disasters, coping with trauma following school shootings, school violence, helping children deal with grief and trauma following 9-11, bullying in schools, threat assessment, and identifying troubled students.



PROGRAM FACULTY



Dr. Martha Pelaez

Core Faculty

pelaezm@fiu.edu

Martha Pelaez, Ph.D. is a Frost Professor in the College of Arts, Sciences, and Education at Florida International University where she has received twice a Faculty Research Award (1997 & 2015). She is a Fellow of APA, Division 25, and has authored over 100 peer-reviewed articles and monographs. She is the Founding Editor (1991–2017) of the *Behavioral Development Bulletin*, a peer reviewed journal and has been as a Visiting Scholar at 13 universities in 6 countries. Her areas of research include infant learning and attachment, maternal depression effects on infant behavior, interventions using touch to increase infant attention, the effects of adult vocal imitation and motherese speech on infant vocalizations, infant joint attention and social referencing, stimulus equivalence in infants behavior, *Child & Adolescent Development* (textbook with Novak, SAGE, 2004). Her past research received funding from NIH. She is currently interested in infants ‘at-risk’ of autism.

ANOTHER SIDE OF DR. PELAEZ

The sea has always been a very important part of my life. I grew up six blocks from the Gulf of Mexico, in Veracruz. Then, I lived for 10 years in San Juan, PR, just two blocks away from the Atlantic Ocean. Before I moved to Miami, in 1984, my first sailing experience was in a small Hobie Cat then, in 2004, I was already a professor at FIU and got my own sailboat, Balance, a 29 foot Cal. Being in Balance taught me how to become independent. Since 2011, I have been sharing with my husband a boat we named Prana (which means "Force of Life"); it is a fast 35 foot Catalina which we enjoy cruising and racing. We have raced many times the 40 miles Miami-Key Largo race and back, and we plan to enter again the 26 miles Miami-to Ft. Lauderdale and back (they call these the Avocado and Mango races). Amazingly, we have won several races in our category. I find sailing very enjoyable and challenging. Sailing has taught me to be self-reliant, more connected with nature and increasingly mindful. I love the sport.



PROGRAM FACULTY



Dr. Andy Pham

Core Faculty

avpham@fiu.edu

Andy V. Pham, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of School Psychology at the School of Education and Human Development at FIU. He is a certified school psychologist (FL), holds a B.A. in Psychology from Boston University, M.A. in School Psychology from Tufts University, and Ph.D. in School Psychology from Michigan State University. He completed his pre-doctoral internship at Virginia Beach City Public Schools, and postdoctoral fellowship at New York University Child Study Center. He has provided school-based consultation to teachers in the Bronx schools and in Costa Rica prior to becoming a faculty member in 2011. Dr. Pham has written over two dozen articles within peer-reviewed journals and book chapters on executive functioning and culturally responsive school-based practices supporting children's academic and social-emotional learning. He was guest co-editor on a special issue of the *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation* titled "Acculturation and sociocultural factors in children's mental health service: Applying multicultural frameworks". He currently serves as Associate Editor for the *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, editorial board member for the *International Journal of School and Educational Psychology*, and Editor for the APA Division 16 newsletter, *The School Psychologist*. Dr. Pham has dedicated much of his career working with culturally and linguistically children and families in schools, and training future school psychologists in the Educational Specialist program (Ed.S.) at FIU.



SUPPORTING FACULTY



Dr. Judith Cohen



Dr. Thomas Reio



PROGRAM FACULTY



Dr. Gary Matloff

Adjunct Faculty

Psychologist of the Year Award. Recently, I developed my own Social Emotional Learning (SEL) curriculum for my elementary school's 5th graders that targets increased social awareness to foster an inclusive mindset (WONDER-ful ME). Even more important, relative to my program's focus are my own beliefs in the need to strengthen one's personal foundation of self-acceptance. Essentially, "the more you like yourself, the less you are like anyone else, which makes you unique" –Walt Disney

Terrence Vaccaro, Ph.D. has been a School Psychologist for 37 years, former Executive Director of Special Education, and School Psychology Supervisor for Miami-Dade County Schools. Currently, he is a school psychologist supporting students with psychiatric disorders in the M-DCPS Hospital Homebound Program. Dr. Vaccaro's work has included providing therapeutic services to students with Severe Emotional Disturbance and Emotional/Behavior Disorders, co-developing the FBA/BIP Process, developing the School Support Team Process, developing and directing the District's Response to Intervention system, and directing RtI support to many low performing schools. Dr. Vaccaro graduated from the FIU School Psychology program in 1983 and received his PhD in Counseling Psychology for the University of Miami in 1992, with an internship in Mental Health and Neuropsychology at Jackson Memorial Hospital. Dr. Vaccaro has been active in his profession, serving as the president of the Florida Association of School Psychologists and has presented on RtI and behavioral intervention at numerous national conferences. In addition to his work at FIU, Dr. Vaccaro has taught courses in school psychology, special education, assessment, counseling, multicultural school psychology, psychopathology, and research methods at several universities in South Florida including the University of Miami, Barry University and Nova Southeastern.



Dr. Terrence Vaccaro

Adjunct Faculty

SOCIAL JUSTICE: A NEW EMPHASIS FOR OUR PROGRAM

The Program Director's Message

Philip J. Lazarus

Within the past few years, our country has changed direction. We have listened to those who railed against immigrants and accused them of being rapists and drug smugglers; we have seen children being locked up in cages; we have observed those who jobs are to protect the environment, instead, try to exploit it; we have heard people with disabilities being mocked; we have looked on as the rights of LGBTQ individuals were curtailed; we have witnessed Gold Star families being ridiculed; we have watched as our institutions that serve to protect us such as the press, the judiciary, and our intelligence agencies come under attack and our democracy threatened. As an antidote to these threats, those who fight for the rights of those most vulnerable among us must act.

Consequently, in Fall 2018, our program embarked on a new direction. We embraced social justice as an overarching concept. As any good sailor knows, a small change in direction can have a major impact on momentum. To gain momentum, we established within our School Psychology Student Association (SPSA) our social justice committee whose members included two interns, Bianca Gutierrez and Munirah McNeely

Bolis, and two first-year students, Byron Garcia and Johanna Lopez.

The mission of this social justice committee, which we define as the "conscience of humanity" is to promote non-discriminatory and equitable practices in school psychology. As such, we help ensure that the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children and families—especially those whose voices and experiences have been marginalized—are promoted. Though the committee was proposed by the program director, the students work in conjunction with the program director and faculty to set the agenda and help provide information and activities that deal with social justice. The committee accesses resources, and develops them when necessary, to enhance our school psychology students' awareness and knowledge of how power, privilege, oppression, and agency differentially impact children's and adolescents' experiences in schools. Basically, we help support equal opportunities for our most vulnerable youth.

The committee helps improve school psychology graduate students' capacity to engage in advocacy to address social justice on local, state, and national levels.



SOCIAL JUSTICE: A NEW EMPHASIS FOR OUR PROGRAM CONTINUED

Social justice has become a high priority for NASP. Our program has the advantage of being in a multicultural urban environment with a student body of underrepresented populations and first- or second-generation immigrants--75% of our students come from Hispanic or Latin, African American, Haitian or Caribbean descent. Therefore, our program can be at the nexus of social justice, multiculturalism, and advocacy.

Below are some of the activities that our students engaged in during our inaugural year.

- o Watched films and listened to NASP podcasts and lectures by students and professors related to social justice followed by student-led discussions. Our topics included (a) coming out as a gay teenager in high school; (b) the experiences and hardships of a DACA student in a school psychology program; (c) the challenges of immigrating to the United States from South America and Cuba; (d) the promotion of educational success of refugee students and families; and (e) lessons learned from our past regarding how psychological testing helped spur on the Eugenics movement and influenced racist immigrations laws.
- o Presented a poster at the annual conference of Trainers of School Psychologists in Atlanta, GA on the Development of a Social Justice Committee within a School Psychology Program.
- o Engaged in philanthropy with underserved populations.
- o Had student-led Get out the Vote initiatives for the U.S. election.
- o Posted links to articles, resources, and events related to social justice on our School Psychology Student listserv.
- o Advocated for positions related to social justice that were consistent with position

papers or white papers developed by the National Association of School Psychologists and/or the National Educational Association.

As a result, we found that developing a social justice committee had two serendipitous benefits: It provided more opportunities for student leadership and fostered a stronger sense of cohesion within the program based on a commitment to shared values. This year, we had one big loss, when we fought against the appointment of Betsy DeVos for Secretary of Education (though it was a very close call) and one big win, when the Department of Education quickly reversed itself and reinstated funding for the Special Olympics (it was totally awful optics for the administration). As with many associations, movements, resurrections, or political action committees that focus on social justice, we sometimes win, but oftentimes lose. It is a never-ending commitment that requires perseverance, grit, patience and the long view, and sometimes after frequent attempts one reaches the distant shore, then regroups, and ventures forth again. Social justice is never a destination; it is always a journey.





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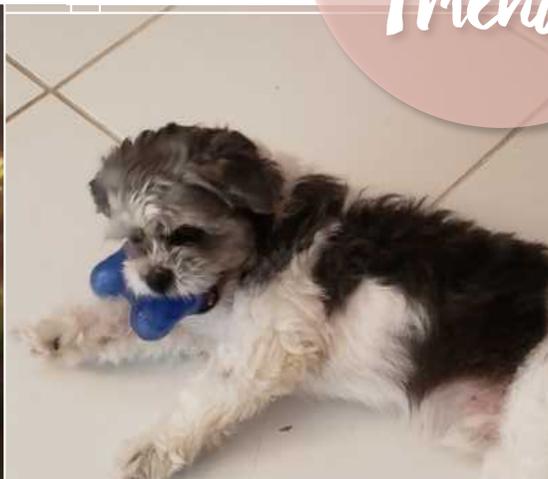


Daisy

Furry Friends



Mushu



Oreo



Fox



Stella



Luna



BunBun



Remembering Donald C. Smith, 1926-2019, *Founder of the FIU School Psychology Program*

By Tom Fagan, University of Memphis

Donald Curtis Smith, the first editor of the *Journal of School Psychology* died on April 29, 2019 in Ft. Myers, FL. He was born in Chestertown, NY on July 19, 1926. A well educated person who came to school psychology from related fields, he received his BA in English (1949), MA in school psychology (1951), and PhD in Developmental/Educational Psychology and Exceptional Children (1959) all from Syracuse University. After an internship in Child Clinical Psychology with the NY State Department of Mental Hygiene, he held academic positions with Ohio State University (1959-1971) including director of the child study center and coordinator of the school psychology program. He then joined the faculty at Florida International University until his retirement in 1993 and moved to Ft. Myers. At FIU he held several administrative positions in the Division of Psycho-Educational Services and the College of Education and helped to develop a school psychology program. His vita identifies numerous university-related committee assignments across the FIU campus. His interview with Donald Wells (1992) reveals Smith's evolving background interests in journalism, clinical psychology, service placements and eventually his encouragement from the distinguished William Cruickshank to return to Syracuse and pursue doctoral studies.

Don was active in the Ohio School Psychologists Association and later the Florida Association of School Psychologists as well as state psychology associations. He was also active in the early years of the Ohio Inter-University

Council on School Psychology that assisted the development of training and promoted state-supported internships across the state. He was an associate member of APA in 1954, then member in 1958 and Fellow in 1969 (Division 16) and held several Division committee assignments. He also was a diplomate in school psychology. I don't believe he was ever a member of NASP. He belonged to several groups during his most active years reflecting his broad interests in psychology and education; and his teaching assignments crossed several education and psychology areas. However, his main school psychology contribution was helping to found and edit the *Journal of School Psychology* 1962-1968 (Fagan & Jack, 2012) and work with the journal's board for several years. Originally sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education, the journal soon encountered financial troubles and was able to continue by selling shares as a private not-for-profit venture. The *JSP* established a long record of financial success and became the financial centerpiece of the Society for the Study of School Psychology. During the 1960s and 1970s, he published several survey articles that helped to define the field's development.

He was married to Jodi Fordyce Smith (1937-2007) from 1964 until her death. Her background was in social work and they had three children. Her family history was the subject of a book she and Don published in 2005 (Smith & Smith, 2005). Perhaps his earlier undergraduate interests as an English and journalism student finally came to fruition.

Remembering Donald C. Smith, 1926-2019, *Founder of the FIU School Psychology Program*

Personal Reflections regarding Dr. Don Smith

By Philip J. Lazarus

I first met Dr. Don Smith in the summer of 1978. He was serving as the Associate Dean of the College of Education at Florida International University. I had applied for a position as an assistant professor in school psychology in the College. His secretary contacted me and said, "Dr. Smith would like to meet you and take you to lunch." She asked if I could meet him at his office at noon. I was anticipating being taken to a fancy restaurant in Coral Gables and met him at his office as directed. Instead, we left his office and walked over to a small snack shop on campus where you put your salad on your plate and the staff weighs your selection and charges you by the ounce. Wow, this was impressive! I could see the great lengths the College was willing to take to wine and dine me. As we were in the check out line, Dr. Smith reached into his pocket for his wallet and noted that he had forgotten it at home. Consequently, I paid for both our lunches. I figured this was an inauspicious sign and assumed that because the Associate Dean did not even try to roll out the red carpet, but instead rolled it up and charged me for it, that I was unlikely to be offered the position.

During our lunch, we spent time talking

about the profession of school psychology and the program. FIU was the first accredited school psychology program in the state which was an achievement because at the time, our University was a fledgling institution, founded on the site of an old airport with only a few buildings standing such as DM, OE, PC, and VH and a much smaller library. The College of Education Building, ZEB, would not be built for about another 20 years and none of the buildings you see in the newsletter existed at the time.

Don discussed his arrival on campus in 1971, his role in developing the FIU program, his experiences creating the *Journal of School Psychology*, his work at the Child Study Center at Ohio State University, and his former employment as a clinical child psychologist. School psychology at the time was an emerging

profession. Prior to 1975, one did not even need either a practicum or an internship in order to be certified by the state of Florida as a school psychologist. Don asked if I would be willing to take a visiting line as opposed to a permanent tenure earning line. Consequently, as I was naive about academia, I asked Don, "This is something new to me, and I am not clear if this would be in my best interests. Therefore, if you



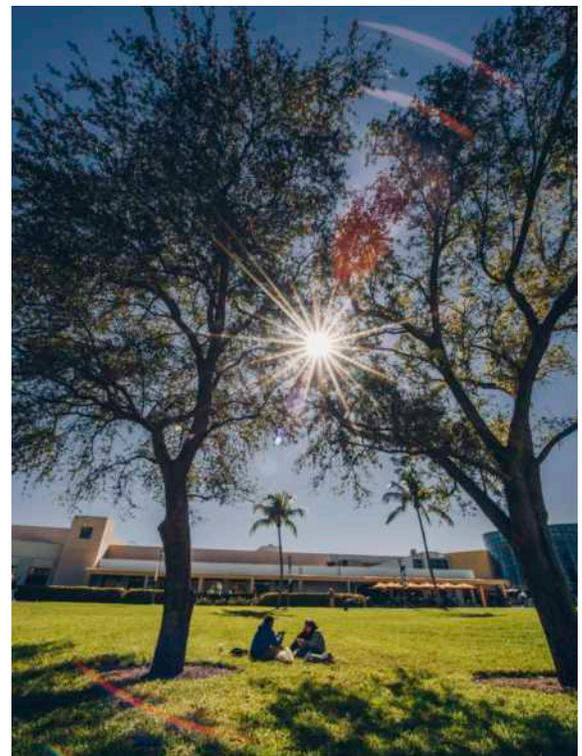
Remembering Donald C. Smith, 1926-2019, *Founder of the FIU School Psychology Program*

were in my position, what would you say?" And Don replied, "If I was in your position, I would not take it. I would ask for a tenure earning line." Then I said, "Thanks for the advice, that is exactly what I will do."

For the next two days, I met with the department faculty and discussed my vision for the program and my research interests. To my surprise, I was offered not only the assistant professor position, but was also asked to serve as the director of the program (for which I felt totally unqualified). However, I am forever grateful for Don's honest reply to my question, because due to changes within the College during my first year, there was the possibility that if I was in a visiting line, I would have been out of a job twelve months later.

I always found Don to be a man of integrity and honesty. He was well respected by faculty and had a distinguished career as a leader at FIU. He was fair and straightforward and mostly served in administrative positions during his time at our University. Don's research was geared toward program evaluation, program development, and a wide range of topics related to education and special education. Don was influential in moving the program from an M.S. in School Psychology to an Ed.S. in School Psychology. He tended to be a hands-off administrator and permitted me to take the program in the direction consistent with NASP standards and my vision of the future, which focused on mental health services. In the

1970's, both Florida Atlantic University and Nova University developed school psychology programs. However, these programs closed shortly thereafter. (The Nova Southeastern University School Psychology Program subsequently reemerged two decades later.) Consequently, both developing and sustaining a program that requires resources and typically has low enrollments is not easy. Don was a man of substance. He helped make this happen. Without his initiative and support, perhaps neither the FIU program nor the *Journal of School Psychology* would be in existence today. For that, and for his relationship to his family, friends, and community, he will always be remembered.





Department of Counseling, Recreation and School Psychology



Program Website
go.fiu.edu/SchoolPsych



Program Handbook
go.fiu.edu/SchoolPsychHandbook



About FIU
www.FIU.edu



Frequently Asked Questions
<http://go.fiu.edu/SchoolPsychFAQ>

Are you interested in the program but still have questions?

Feel free to reach out to one of our student mentors:



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