

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ASSOCIATION

## 2022 NEWSLETTER



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**MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR****DR. ANDY PHAM**

As the program director for FIU's program, I am very excited about this issue, since this marks SPSA's 10th edition of the newsletter! I reflect on our accomplishments not only this past year but also the past decade, and it never ceases to amaze me what our students, faculty, and collaborators bring to our program and to the local communities. The program has doubled in size since 2012, and we continue to expand in providing opportunities and forming partnerships within school districts across Florida.

across Florida. Despite our gradual growth, we also want to keep our program small to foster a supportive and tight-knit community.

We also recognize the challenges our school systems face such as the local and national shortages of school psychologists, along with provision of mental health services to our most vulnerable populations. The impact of state legislation on issues related to LGTBQ support, social-emotional learning, and critical race theory warrant the need for advocacy and continued discussions related to our roles in promoting safety and mental health awareness for youth in schools. I have been immensely proud of our students who are willing to tackle these issues within and outside the program. Students have managed to balance coursework, fieldwork, jobs, and personal lives during a global pandemic. Their potential to become school psychologists and advocates in the profession continues to grow. I always look forward to hearing from our alumni, to listen and read about their personal and professional accomplishments, which all serve as inspiration for me and the next generation of school psychologists.



**MESSAGE FROM THE PROGRAM DIRECTOR****DR. ANDY PHAM**

The following is a snippet of the many highlights this past year:

- The program received national recognition for full NASP approval through 2029.
- Students have been successful in obtaining national certification with 100% pass rate on Praxis exams
- One of the largest cohorts to date, 19 students received paid internships for the 2022-2023 school year.
- Our core faculty closely work with students on various clinical, research, and grant-funded projects leading to national presentations and publications.
- Our adjunct faculty bring in a wealth of clinical expertise from Miami-Dade County, Broward County, and Palm Beach School Districts.
- Our practicum and internship supervisors and affiliated faculty across departments have provided many clinical and research opportunities for students.
- The Social Justice Committee has done amazing work in bringing awareness and discussion related to social justice in schools and the community.
- We have recruited our second cohort of Project SPECIAL who is starting their first semester of classes this Fall.
- I wanted to thank Dr. Philip Lazarus for serving as the program for many years. His leadership and advocacy have inspired me to continue to work towards improving the education and lives of children and families. I very much look forward to the 2022-2023 school year!

*Sincerely,*

**DR. ANDY PHAM  
PROGRAM DIRECTOR**

## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

# ELISA LAGÉ



Dear faculty and friends,

That's a wrap on the 2021-2022 school year! I cannot believe how quickly this year came and went and I feel so fortunate for this moment to reflect on what we have all accomplished. This year, we were all lucky to get to move back in the direction of the pre- COVID-19 life; reintroducing *in-person* classes, socials, meetings, and the end-of-the-year banquet.

The SPSA executive board knew that this year would bring with it its own unique challenges as we navigated this transition, and we rose to the occasion with a mission to successfully coordinate events to keep all students engaged. One way in which we did this was by continuing to offer a virtual option for most events for those students who were not yet comfortable or able to attend in person and in an effort to include our interns.

We also set forth to connect the new cohort of students with existing students, interns, alumni,

and faculty by hosting the first annual SPSA Mixer at the beginning of the school year in an effort to encourage closeness and foster relationships both within cohorts and across all stages of the program.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my fellow e-board members: Isabel Guaragna (Vice President), Edwin Alvarez (Secretary), Gisell Rodriguez (Treasurer), and Brittany Sealy (RSO Representative). Through teamwork and dedication, we were able to continue our program on its path of growth and excellence through opportunities for professional development and by encouraging our fellow students to participate in and attend state and national conferences such as FASP and NASP. I also want to shout out the dedication of the Social Justice Committee Co-Chairs, Jessica Bus and Monika Lopez, whose passion for Social Justice was evident through their commitment to their committee and its members.

Together, we have made it through another year! Our former interns are off to their new jobs, all of our prospective interns secured paid internships across the country, and our faculty continue to dedicate themselves to ensuring the highest quality education and opportunities for us students.

As we continue to grow as a program, I know that SPSA is in the excellent hands of the passionate, optimistic, and creative incoming executive board who have big ideas and great plans for the organization.

The 2021-22 SPSA E-board and I are honored to have had the opportunity to serve our program this year and we wish you the absolute best 2022-23 academic year!

*Sincerely,*

**ELISA LAGÉ**  
**OUTGOING SPSA PRESIDENT**



## FACULTY &amp; STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

## PUBLICATIONS

Baralt, M., Griffith, S. F., Hanson, K. L., André, N., Blair, L., & Bagner, D. M. (2022). How family needs informed an early literacy family reading program in multilingual and multicultural Miami-Dade County. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14687984221093242>

**Bastian, R., Davis, A., Lage, E., & Bus, J.** (2021). Social Justice Committees as Safe Spaces in the Midst of Civil Unrest. *NASP Communique*.

Burt, I., Pham, A., & Hyun, J. (2021). Reexamining Asian American masculinity and the model minority myth through a school-based counseling group. *Professional School Counseling*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X211040032>

Cumming, M. M., **Criado, C., Arango, A.**, Park, J., Ali, M., & Rodriguez, M. (2022). Addressing middle schoolers' disruptive behavior: The importance of fostering student executive functioning. *TEACHING Exceptional Children*. Advanced online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00400599221093393>

Cumming, M., Poling, D. V., Qiu, Y., Pham, A. V., Daunic, A. P., Corbett, N., & Smith, S.W. (2021) A validation study of the BRIEF-2 among Kindergartners and first graders at-risk for behavior problems. *Assessment*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10731911211032289>

Fabiano, G. A., Schatz, N. K., Lupas, K., Gordon, C., Hayes, T., Tower, D., ... & Hulme, K. (2021). A school-based parenting program for children with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder: Impact on paternal caregivers. *Journal of School Psychology*, 86, 133-150.

Field, T., Poling, S., Mines, S., Diego, M., Bendell, D., & Pelaez, M. (2021). Trauma symptoms following romantic breakups. *Journal of Psychology and Clinical Psychiatry*, 12(2), 37-42.



## FACULTY &amp; STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

## PUBLICATIONS

Griffith, S. F., Hart, K. C., **Mavrakis, A. A.**, & Bagner, D. M. (2022). Making the best of app use: The impact of parent-child co-use of interactive media on children's learning in the US. *Journal of Children and Media*, 16(2), 271-287.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17482798.2021.1970599>

Lazarus, P. J., Doll, B., Song, S. Y., & Radliff, K. (2021). Transforming school mental health services based on a culturally responsible dual-factor model. *School Psychology Review*, 1-16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2021.1968282>

Lupas, K. K., **Mavrakis, A.**, Altszuler, A., Tower, D., Gnagy, E., MacPhee, F., Ramos, M., Merrill, B., Ward, L., Gordon, C., Schatz, N., Fabiano, G., & Pelham, W., Jr. (2021). The short-term impact of remote instruction on achievement in children with ADHD during the COVID-19 pandemic. *School Psychology*, 36(5), 313–324.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000474>

Neimy, H., & Pelaez, M. (2021). Early interventions for infants at risk of autism spectrum disorder. In M. Alexandros, C. Drossel, & T. J. Waltz (Eds.), *Applications of Behavior Analysis to Healthcare and Beyond* (pp. 77-111). New York: Springer.

Novak, G., & Pelaez, M. (2021). Frances Degen Horowitz's influence on behavioral systems theory. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 54(4), 1293-1296.  
<https://doi.org/10.1002/jaba.878>

Novak, G., Pelaez, M., & DeBernardis, G. (2022). *Child development: A behavioral systems approach*. Sloan Publications. (Textbook)

Pham, A.V., Goforth, A. N., Aguilar, L., Burt, I., **Bastian, R.**, & Diakow, D. (2021). Dismantling systemic inequities in school psychology: Cultural humility as a foundational approach to social justice. *School Psychology Review* <https://doi.org/10.1080/2372966X.2021.1941245>

## FACULTY &amp; STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

## PRESENTATIONS

**Bastian, R. K., Davis, A. L., Lage, E. M., & Bus, J. L.** (2022, February). Social Justice Committees as Safe Spaces in School Psychology Programs. [Paper presentation]. Annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists, Boston, MA.

**Bus, J. L., Del Campo, A., Desir, S., Garcia, A., Lopez, M., Sealy, B., & Walker, D. A.** (2021, November). Sociocultural Perspective on Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. [Pre-recorded Poster presentation]. FASP 2021 Virtual Convention.

Cumming, M. M., **Criado, C.**, Flores, H., Park, J., & **Arango, A.**, (2022, January). Fostering student executive functioning: The effectiveness of school-based interventions. Poster presented at the Council of Exceptional Children 100th Annual Conference. Orlando, FL.

**Davis, A., Bastien, R., & Lazarus, P. J.** (2022, February). Suicide among Black girls: Addressing the growing mental health crisis. A poster presented at the annual convention of National Association of School Psychologists. Boston, MA.

**Davis, A., Bastien, R., & Lazarus, P. J.** (2022, February). Suicide among Black girls: Addressing the growing mental health crisis. A virtual poster session presented at the annual convention of the Florida Association of School Psychologists.

Griffith, S.F. (2022). Disentangling Complex Relationships Between Screen Media Use and School Readiness. The National Association of School Psychologists Annual Convention, Boston, MA.

## FACULTY &amp; STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

## PRESENTATIONS

Griffith, S.F. (2021). More than a babysitter? Examining perceptions and practices around screen media use in low-income families. The National Academy of Education Annual Meeting.

Lazarus, P. J. (2022, February) The three pillars of safe and supportive schools: An integrative model for fostering students' well-being. A paper presented at the annual convention of National Association of School Psychologists. Boston, MA.

Lazarus, P. J., Doll, B., Song, S. & Radliff, K. (2021). Transforming school mental health services based on a culturally responsible dual-factor + model. A paper presented at the annual conference of the Trainers of School Psychologists. Boston, MA

Lazarus, P. J. (2021, November). Utilizing the five elements of crisis intervention following natural disasters. Pre-recorded virtual paper session presented at the Caribbean Regional Conference of Psychology. Virgin Islands.

**Pelaez, R., Lage, E., & Pelaez, M.** (2022, May) The Effects of Contingent Motherese Speech and Vocal Imitations on the Vocalizations of Typically Developing Infants and an Infant At-Risk for Autism Spectrum Disorder: A Comparison of Research [Poster presentation]. Annual conference of the Association for Behavioral Analysis International, Boston, MA.

Pham, A. V., **Bus, J. L., Lopez, M., Del Campo, A., Desir, S., Garcia, A., Walker, D., & Sealy, B.** (2022, February). Culturally responsive and strengths-based approaches to managing disruptive behavior disorders. Poster presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Psychologists.

## FACULTY GRANTS

## GRANTS

**Dr. Shayl Griffith**

Adapting a Parenting Intervention to Promote Healthy Screen Time Habits in Young Children with Behavior Problems (1R21HD104367-01A1) Funding Source: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)  
Total award: \$405,625

**Dr. Kelli Lupas**

A Closed-Loop Intervention to Promote a Supportive and Interactive Environment around Children (PI: Bai; Award No. 2125549). Funding Source: National Science Foundation. Total award: \$150,000.

Interventions for English Language Learners at Risk for ADHD (PI: Schatz; R324A210221). Funding Source: Institute of Education Sciences. Total award: \$3,792,323.

Single and Combined Effects of Positive Behavior Support, Medication, and Academic Accommodations for Children with ADHD (PI: Fabiano; 1R01HD105318-01). Funding Source: National Institute of Child Health and Human Development. Total award: \$3,667,465.





## NEW FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

**PROFESSOR NAYLET LA ROCHELLE**

Professor Naylet La Rochelle is an adjunct professor at FIU. She has taught undergraduate Educational Psychology for two years. This summer she was honored to teach a Psychopathology course to our school psychology graduate students. As a professor, she hopes to instill her students with a sense of respect and love for our profession. Most of all, she feels the role of school psychologist is one that can make a difference in a child's life.



## NEW FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

# PROFESSOR NAYLET LA ROCHELLE

When asked, “What is one inspiration you hope your students will leave with after they completed your course?” She stated, “As I always tell my students, as school psychologists we need to strive to be experts in the field. Our schools are dynamic and ever-changing and we need to be prepared and equipped to provide appropriate services and recommendations at all tiers of support. We need to strive to be part of the school community at all levels and build relationships with administrators, teachers, and parents so that we can appropriately serve our students.”

Professor Naylet La Rochelle is an FIU alum with a Bachelor's degree in Special Education. After graduation, she worked at Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) at Biscayne Gardens Elementary. She taught a fifth and sixth grade Varying Exceptionalities class for two years. Then, she was transferred to Ben Sheppard Elementary where she taught a PreK SPED class for four years. As a SPED teacher, she had the opportunity to work with the school's multidisciplinary team on a regular basis. In the IEP eligibility meetings, she witnessed how the school psychologist interpreted results of a psychological evaluation, offered recommendations for continued support and services, and was an integral part of the school community, supporting students, parents, and teachers. This was her motivation to pursue a degree in the field of school psychology at FIU. She completed her internship in Broward County, and then returned to MDCPS as a full-time school psychologist. She has always enjoyed being a mentor and supervisor to interns and incoming school psychologists. She has had more than 15 interns to date. Currently, she is one of two School Psychology internship coordinators for MDCPS. Throughout her 22 years as a school psychologist, she discovered that she enjoys working with ASD students as well as continuing her education in the area of school neuropsychology.

*Sincerely,*

PROFESSOR  
NAYLET LA ROCHELLE

## SOCIAL JUSTICE CORNER

Throughout the 2021-2022 academic year, Social Justice Committee Co-Chairs Jessica Bus and Monika Lopez led and moderated meetings focused on conversations surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion. These meetings occurred once or twice per month in which participants reviewed articles, book chapters, position papers, podcasts, and more related to topics of interest, such as LGBTQIA+ rights, issues in the Black community, and new civil rights state legislature. These organized events allowed students to discuss their personal experiences or those of their families related to social justice and connect such issues to the study and practice of school psychology.

*Sincerely,*

JESSY BUS & MONIKA LOPEZ

**Celebrating how much  
Black lives matter - not  
just in February.**



## House Rules

Speak to Inform, Listen to Understand  
Respect one another's time and perspective  
What is said here, stays here; What is learned here, leaves here.

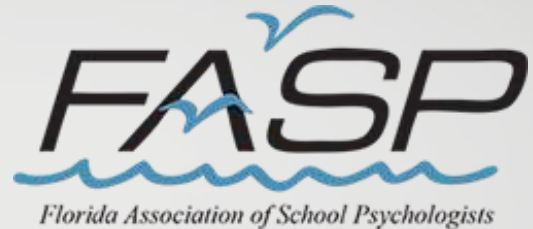




## FASP HIGHLIGHTS

As a profession, we are in the midst of challenges we have never faced before. Yet, as school psychologists, we've thrived as dedicated and inspired professionals working to support our communities in Florida.

More than ever, this year's conference highlighted the importance of social, emotional, and mental health. As we face a school year full of uncertainty, FASP continues to advocate for school psychologists as the academic and mental health experts in schools who are uniquely qualified to support the ever-growing needs of students, families and educators across our state.



## PRESENTATIONS

Jessica Bus, Alyssa Del Campo, Stephania Desir, Amy Garcia, Monkia Lopez, Brittany Sealy and Dom Walker presented a poster on the **'Sociocultural Perspective on Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.'**

Dr. Philip Lazarus, Alexis Davis, Renee Bastain presented a poster on **'Suicide Amongst Black Girls: Addressing a Growing Mental Health Crisis.'**

# NASP HIGHLIGHTS

FEBRUARY 15-18, 2022- BOSTON, MA

NASP Annual Convention Brings Together More Than 3,500 School Psychologists From Across the United States. Given recent learning disruption and trauma attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, school psychology services are in demand more now than ever before. This year's convention brings together renowned experts in children's learning, development, and mental health to examine the practices essential to creating school environments in which all students thrive. Topics addressed at the 2022 convention included: creating trauma-sensitive schools, school safety and crisis responses, positive discipline, addressing the academic needs of diverse learners, and supporting LGBTQ+ students.

Keynote speaker Dr. Temple Grandin shared her experiences and expertise on living with autism, her understanding of the human mind, and the ways educators and school psychologists can support the learning, healthy development, and well-being of students with autism. Tapping into her personal experiences from the challenges of being a child with autism to her significant accomplishments as a scientist, author, and public speaker, her keynote address focused specifically on how to help individuals with autism navigate the often unseen, unwritten rules of social interactions.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER  
**TEMPLE GRANDIN**  
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16  
11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M. EST

NASP Ψ  
#NASP2022

The graphic features a portrait of Temple Grandin on the left. The background is dark blue with white text. At the bottom, there is a circular logo with a brain and a face, and the text 'ENGAGING HEARTS & MINDS' and 'NASP 2022'. The NASP logo and the hashtag #NASP2022 are also present.

## NASP HIGHLIGHTS

## PRESENTATIONS

Jessica Bus presented a poster on the **'Examining School Resource Officers and Student Outcomes.'**

Jessica Bus, Alyssa Del Campo, Monika Lopez, and Dr. Pham presented a poster on the **' Culturally responsive and strengths-based approaches to managing disruptive behavior disorders.'**

Dr. Lazarus presented on the **'The three pillars of safe and supportive schools: An integrative model for fostering students' well-being..'**

Dr. Griffith presented on the **'Disentangling Complex Relationships Between Screen Media Use and School Readiness.'**

Renee Bastian, Elisa Valle, Jessica Bus, Alexis Davis presented on the **'Social Justice Committees as Safe Spaces in School Psychology Programs.'**

Renee Bastian, Alexis Davis, and Dr. Lazarus presented a poster on the **'Suicide among Black girls: Addressing the growing mental health crisis.'**

# NASP HIGHLIGHTS





## STUDENT LEADERS & AWARDS

SPSA President-Elect

**Shaniya Morris**

SPSA President

**Elisa Lagé**

Project SPECIAL  
Scholars

**Alexis Ahumada**

**Lesline Charles**

**Marsha Francois**

**Madelyn Llaneras**

**Jessica Paul**

**John Smith**

**Patricia Sandoval**

**Camilo Torres**

**Kaitlyn Weaver**

**Shatisha Yearby**

CASE Award for  
Graduate Academic  
Achievement

**Athena Mavrakis**

CASE Award for  
Service Recognition

**Alexis Davis**

Outstanding Student  
Life Award

**Renee Bastian**

SPSA Social Justice  
Warrior Award

**Renee Bastian**

**Alexis Davis**

Patty Del Valle  
Humanitarian Award

**Elisa Lagé**

NASP Student  
Leaders

**Elisa Lagé**

**Alyssa Del Campo**

FASP Student  
Representatives

**Elisa Lagé**

**Jillian Delisle**

## FACULTY AWARDS

FIU Faculty Senate Award  
for Excellence in Advising  
& Mentorship

**Andy Pham**

FIU Top Scholar (2021)

**Martha Pelaez**

# 2022-2023 STUDENT E-BOARD

## President



Shaniya Morris

"I am most excited about working with this upcoming SPSA eboard. This eboard is bursting with passionate, innovative, and brilliant students and I'm very honored to work alongside them. We have some great ideas for this year, and I am more than eager to see them come to fruition!"

## Vice-President



Samantha Casanova

"I am very excited to be serving as vice president of SPSA this coming school year. In conjunction with our J.E.D.I (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) Committee, I look forward to learning from one another and giving back to our community, new experiences and professional development opportunities we are planning!"

## Treasurer



Gaberiel Gonzalez

"Hi everyone, as the SPSA Treasurer I look forward to providing fun and innovative events that will help us grow as school psychology students. I can't wait to collaborate with my fellow eboard members and make this year a memorable one."

## Secretary



Jillian Delisle

As a member of the eboard I am looking forward to the opportunity to be involved in expanding this club at FIU and growing with my peers professionally! We have a lot of great activities in the works and I am excited to have more in person events!

## RSO Representative



William Willson

"I'm looking forward to the opportunity of getting to help ensure my fellow psychology student get to have a fun and inclusive experience here at FIU, while also getting to help the incoming class succeed in and outside of FIU."





**FIU**



SPSA EVENTS





**FIU**

STEVEN AND DORIS HEA GREEN LIBRARY

**GRADUATE & RESEARCH ASSISTANTS**



**Cristina Criado Barrios**

Research Assistant  
Dr. Michelle Cumming  
Project Pathways



**Edwin Alvarez**

Graduate Assistant  
Homework Helpers



**Elisa Lage**

Graduate Assistant  
Dr. Valerie Dixon



**Gisell Rodriguez**

Graduate Assistant  
Office of Student Access  
& Success



**Gigi Rossi**

Graduate Assistant  
Dr. Valerie Dixon



**Hannah Lefford**

Graduate Assistant  
Dr. Amanda Allen

## GRADUATE & RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



**Jillian Delisle**

Graduate Assistant  
Office of Institutional  
Effectiveness



**Samantha Casanova**

Graduate Assistant  
Dr. Shayl Griffith



**Shaniya Morris**

Graduate Assistant  
Dr. Kelli Lupas



**Solomon Kamara**

Graduate Assistant  
Dr. Alena Prihidko  
& Dr. Emily Messina



**William Wilson**

Graduate Assistant  
Office of Academic Planning  
& Accountability



The best GA experience I could've asked for! Working directly with kids reminds you to keep pushing forward. You apply things we have learned in class and make an impact in their lives by becoming a teacher, mentor, cheerleader, and a friend for these kiddos.

- Gisell Rodriguez

It's been a great experience, these two professors have been a pleasure to work with! Easy to communicate with along with working together has helped me learn and grow a lot!

- Solomon Kamara

**2022-2023 INTERNS**

**ELISA LAGÉ**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ISABEL GUARAGNA**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**JESSICA BUS**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**REBECA PELAEZ**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**RYAN DELL'AQUILA**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**STEPHANIA DESIR**

CITRUS COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

**ALYSSA DEL CAMPO**

COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**EDWIN ALVAREZ**

COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**AMY GARCIA**

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**BRITTANY SEALEY**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**CRISTINA CRIADO-BARRIOS**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**HANNAH LEFFORD**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**IBIS MENDOZA**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MELISSA TORRES**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ROSALINA LA O**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**VICTORIA SANCHEZ**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**GISSELL RODRIGUEZ**

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH

COUNTY

**MONIKA LOPEZ**

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC

SCHOOLS, MD

**DOMINQUE WALKER**

DENTON INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

DISTRICT, TX



*Good Luck!*

**2021-2022 INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE**

# **ALEXIS DAVIS**

Hi friends!

Alexis Davis here and I just recently completed my internship experience in Pinellas County Schools!

I was born and raised in Pinellas County (St. Pete, FL to be exact) so I felt that interning in Pinellas County (and now working for Pinellas County starting this upcoming fall!) was a good way to give back to the community that helped raise me.

Pinellas County serves a unique internship experience. Not only do you work under your supervisor at their school(s), but you also have your own school right away. It's considered a semi-independent site because although you are serving as the school's school psych, your supervisor is on call when you need them.

My own internship experience was unique in itself because it was my supervisor's first time being a supervisor as well as her first time working in a transformation zone (TZ) school. A transformation zone school is typically a school that has a failing grade and is filled with students with different needs (usually from low-income families, students with disabilities, etc.).



## 2021-2022 INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

A TZ school is full of challenges, but my supervisor did such a fantastic job teaching me the ropes of being a school psychologist (shoutout to Caitlin Asencio!!). My semi-independent site was a fundamental school, where the approach is “focusing on student responsibility and self-discipline”. Parents are fully involved (sometimes, a little too involved) in the entire academic process and are required to attend mandatory monthly meetings.

My semi-independent site came with many challenges. Within the first few weeks of school, I had two “high-flying” cases that caused a great amount of anxiety. Although my supervisor was on Teams to help me in every way she could (since she was not physically at my school with me), I struggled with self-doubt and questioned whether I was a good fit for this career. Once the winter months rolled in, I felt more confident in my abilities. Another challenge I had to face were the parents. The parents were often combative and went against anything the MTSS team suggested. It was very hard to build collaborative relationships with them but I learned that I had to not only stand up for their kid’s best interest, but for myself as well. As an intern, you’re often afraid to challenge people, especially when they’re older than you - but for the sake of the children, sometimes, you have to go against the grain. You really have to be the change you want to see!

My boss (shoutout to Mike Cowley!) is also one of the best people you could ever work for! I could contact him at any given time (even on weekends, which was wild to me!) and he would answer. When I was sick with COVID, he was one of the first people to call me and check in on me. He goes above and beyond for all the school psychs, and even as an intern, I felt appreciated and cared for by him.

My internship taught me a lot about myself and how I want my career to go. I know what types of school climates, staff, and parents I want to be surrounded with. I know what kind of populations I’d like to work with. I most definitely want to incorporate social justice in any and everything I do because school psychology, at its core, should strive for social justice, transformative change, etc.

I love my hometown, I love the kids that I got the chance to work and interact with, and I’m so happy to continue to work in Pinellas County! I’m very nervous yet excited to really start my career.

*Sincerely,*

**ALEXIS DAVIS**





2022-2023 INCOMING STUDENTS



**JESSICA  
PAUL**

**Education:** B.A. in Psychology and Interdisciplinary studies from Florida International University

**Where are you from:** South Florida

**Hobbies/interests:** Reading, crocheting, watching videos on YouTube and shows on Netflix, and hanging out with family and friends

**Why school psychology?:** I want to become a school psychologist because I am interested in working with youth and their families in an educational setting. Due to my current volunteer and work experiences, I am passionate about working with students with special needs, and providing them with the tools and resources necessary for them to succeed academically, behaviorally, and emotionally.

**CAMILO  
TORRES**

**Education:** B.A. in Psychology from FIU

**Where are you from:** Born and raised in Colombia

**Hobbies/Interests:** Hiking, play soccer, cooking

**Why school psychology?:** After academic, research and life experiences. I decided to become a school psychologist to provide psychological services within a multicultural setting, to promote psychological development of children and create mental health awareness within the Hispanic community and other minority groups. Moreover, I want to create programs where children will excel academically and provide the necessary tools for children to have better life outcomes.

2022-2023 INCOMING STUDENTS



**JOHN SMITH**

**Education:** Rhode Island College, B.A. Psychology; UMASS Amherst, M.Ed., School Counseling; Andover Newton Theological, M.Div.

**Where are you from:** Born in New York, raised in New York and Boston MA

**Hobbies/interests:** Travel, DIY Home Improvement and HIIT group fitness

**Why school psychology?:** To ensure that all students receive access to educational services regardless of learning disabilities. As well as advocating for students, parents and guardians that may lack knowledge and resources as a result of their socio-economic status, and or vulnerabilities affecting equal access to educational services

**MADELYN LLANERAS**

**Education:** B.A. in Psychology from FIU; M.S. in Counselor Education (Clinical Mental Health Counseling Track) from FIU

**Where are you from:** Born in Havana, Cuba; grew up in Miami, Florida

**Hobbies/Interests:** Volunteering and community involvement, traveling and reading

**Why school psychology?:** I am attracted to the field of school psychology as I can make a positive, lasting difference in children's lives. As a school psychologist, I can become a vital part of the effort to bring about each child's potential for success in and out of school.

2022-2023 INCOMING STUDENTS



**LESLINE CHARLES**

**Education:** B.A. in Psychology from FIU

**Where are you from:** Miami, FL

**Hobbies/interests:** My interests include reading, playing music, social justice, and traveling. (My favorite travel destinations have been Sydney, Australia and Johannesburg, South Africa).

**Why school psychology?:** I chose School Psychology because I had the opportunity to work with children as an After school counselor. I also worked as a volunteer tutor for students with special needs. I enjoyed watching them succeed. I am a fervent believer in helping individuals to reach their educational goals no matter what challenges they face. I am also a bilingual Haitian-Creole speaker.



**KAITLYN WEAVER**

**Education:** B.S. in Psychology with an emphasis in Behavioral Analysis & B.S. in Family, Youth, and Community Services from UF; M.A. in Special Education from UF

**Where are you from:** Panama City, FL

**Hobbies/Interests:** I love to go to the beach and hike. I also love painting and DIY projects (even though I am not very good!) I love trying new foods and am looking forward to being able to try new restaurants.

**Why school psychology?:** I chose school psychology after shadowing a school psychologist in my home town and loving the multidisciplinary work that she did with the school team to help support the students. I love that I will be able to form good, supportive relationships with the students I serve and help to provide the support they need to be more successful at school. I am very analytically driven too so the ability to find an individualized approach to helping people through analyzing assessments appeals to me. Mostly though, I have always loved helping people, especially kids, and am looking forward to having a career where I feel like I am able to make a difference in a child's educational journey.

2022-2023 INCOMING STUDENTS



**PATRICIA SANDOVAL**

**Education:** AA from Broward college & B.A. in Elementary Education with a minor in Psychology

**Where are you from:** Miami

**Hobbies/Interests:**  
Swimming and leisure reading

**Why school psychology?:** I chose school psychology because I want to work directly with children and adolescents by spreading knowledge and awareness about different abilities of how kids learn, play and react to the world around them.



**MARSHA FRANCOIS**

**Education:** Miami Dade College - AA in Psychology, FIU - BS In Psychology, Johnson and Wales University - MBA, Barry University - MS. in Reading Education

**Where are you from:** Miami

**Interests/hobbies:** Vlogging, Cooking, Working Out, Healthy Eating, Mindfulness, Meditation, Gaming

**Why School Psychology?:** Over the past decade, tremendous gains have been made in U.S. education, but more must be done. Progress hasn't come fast enough for many students, especially Black and Latino students and students experiencing poverty. The expertise of the school psychologist is especially helpful in addressing the needs of children with chronic conditions and making sure that they thrive in the classroom setting. I want to work as a school psychologist with other partners, teachers, and education leaders to ensure that all students have access to a high-quality public education and to help more students graduate from high school with the skills they need to enroll, succeed in, and complete college.

2022-2023 INCOMING STUDENTS

**SHATISHA  
YEARBY**

**Education:** Miami Dade College-AA; FIU- BS in Psychology

**Why school psychology?:**

I chose school psychology because I wanted to make a difference in ensuring academic success and support for students.

Welcome



**2022 GRADUATES!**

**EUGENIA ROMERO**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MATT NETINA**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**RENEE BASTIAN**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**SARAH ABULKHEIR**

BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MARIO CAMPOS**

COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ALEX ARANGO**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ALEX LUMARQUE**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ASHLEY HANSON**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ATHENA MAVRAKIS**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**DENISSE GONZALEZ**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MANOELA SUAREZ**

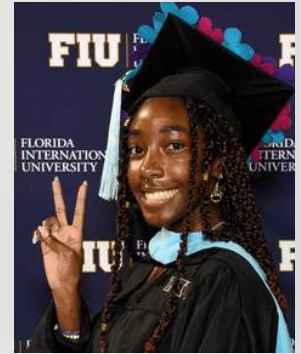
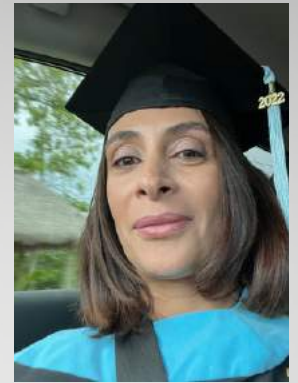
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**RACHEL CASANAS**

MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ALEXIS DAVIS**

PINNELAS COUNTY SCHOOLS







# FIU

## Arts, Sciences & Education

FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

# SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT ASSOCIATION



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### SPSA NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE:

ISABEL GUARAGNA, ELISA VALLE, JILLIAN DELISLE, HANNAH LEFFORD,  
STEPHANIA DESIR, PRISCILLA ALFARO, SOLOMON KAMARA

A large white sign with the FIU logo in blue and yellow, set against a background of palm trees and a blue sky.

**FIU**

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UNIVERSITY**