From SPSA President and Vice President

The School Psychology Student Association (SPSA) had a very successful year in 2015-2016! The SPSA Executive Board, led by Paulie Martinez (President) and Silvana Newman (Vice-President), organized several events that brought its members together to spread awareness of School Psychology as well as supporting our local community. SPSA’s efforts led to all necessary points being earned towards next year’s special allocation funding! These funds will be available to be used by SPSA during the Fall 2016 semester and will help fund some of the travel costs for the FASP conference as well as other expenses.

In the fall, SPSA attended the Autism Walk and hosted a Signature Event that featured the movie, *Extreme Love: Autism*. We also distributed NASP brochures and bookmarks related to the role of School Psychologists around the FIU Modesto Madique campus. SPSA attended professional development presentations as well as sporting events on campus. Moreover, the graduate students attended the Florida Association of School Psychologists (FASP) conference in Orlando, Fl. We were proud to hear that Nathaly Ossa was awarded the Ed.S. Graduate Student of the Year Award for the state of Florida and Annela Costa was nominated for the Faye Henderson Minority Graduate Leadership Award.

In February, SPSA members and faculty attended the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) conference in New Orleans. Every year, the NASP conference presents an excellent networking opportunity for students including a mentoring program and professional development. In a collaborative
From SPSA President and Vice-President (continued)

effort to support and help our local homeless community, SPSA joined together with the Student Organization for Exceptional Children (SOEC) on a collection drive for Miami Rescue Mission and donated clothes and hygiene items.

SPSA also organized the annual Meet and Greet at Chili’s on the FIU campus where many of the current students met with the new students for the first time. This was a great way to establish social, professional, and mentoring relationships outside of class. They discussed various topics on learning how to navigate Graduate School more easily, including advice on coursework and how to balance school, work, and family. These gatherings help to continue building a stronger SPSA each year.

In April, we held our annual lunch-eon banquet at Brio in the Dolphin Mall to celebrate all the accomplishments of the first-year and second-year students, and especially the graduating interns! Dr. Lazarus presented Annela Costa with the Patty Del Valle Humanitarian Award! This award is given to one student who embodies Dr. Del Valle’s compassion, empathy and warmth to everyone. Annela was nominated and selected by her peers for this recognition. The interns also received gifts as they finish their internship in June, and are eagerly awaiting to start their new jobs in the Fall!

Lastly, we wish the new Executive Board the best as they carry on the SPSA tradition! Congratulations to Alexa Borotto who was elected as the incoming President for 2016-2017 academic year. Also on the Executive Board will be Sandra Ferret as Vice President, Christina Williams as Treasurer, Melonie Mendez as Secretary, and Bianca Santacoloma as Social Chair. Go Panthers!
Student Accomplishments

- Congratulations to Nathaly Ossa who won the FASP Graduate Studies Award for 2016!
- Annela Costa was nominated for the Faye Henderson Exemplary Leadership Award at FASP. She was also nominated and selected by her peers for the Patty del Valle Humanitarian Award. To top it off, she was admitted to the Ed.D. program in Exceptional Student Education at FIU and will be starting her doctoral studies in Fall 2016!
- Laynie Burns received three (3) School of Education scholarships for the 2016-2017 academic year! She received the Lennar Corporation Scholarship, Felicitas Sanchez Scholarship, and the SOE Faculty Scholarship. Laynie was selected for her outstanding GPA and commitment to education.
- Diana Arce and Rose Gourdet were offered School Psychologist jobs at Miami-Dade County Public Schools! They are completing their internships in the same county.
- We are fortunate to have 100% internship placement rate again this year! Jessica Rothman and Nahomie Saint Pierre will be at Broward County Public Schools. Paulie Martinez will be Jefferson County Public Schools in Denver, Colorado. Mailin Delgado, Yesenia Joyas, and Silvana Newman will be at MDCPS. Way to go!
- Thank you Paulie Martinez for serving as the FIU Student Ambassador to FASP!
- Thank you Annela Costa and Jessica Rothman for serving as NASP Student Leaders!
- Annela Costa, Yesenia Joyas, Nathaly Ossa, Paulie Martinez, and Gemma Rosa co-presented with Dr. Phil Lazarus at both FASP and NASP conferences.
- We want to thank Paulie Martinez and Silvana Newman for their outstanding leadership this year for SPSA!

Student conference presentations at NASP


Graduation Day 2016

Congratulations!!

Vanessa Dendinger, Ed.S.
Rose Gourdet, Ed.S.
Rodna Francois, Ed.S.
Lindsay Piontkowski, Ed.S.
Nathaly Ossa, Ed.S.
Diana Arce, Ed.S.
Annela Costa, Ed.S.
Alumni Spotlight—Laura Cruz, Ph.D.

Following my school psychology internship with Miami-Dade County Public Schools and upon completion of the program at Florida International University, I worked as a bilingual school psychologist with Polk County School District for one year, specializing in bilingual and low-incidence assessments. I then went on to pursue a Ph.D. at Florida State University’s Combined Counseling and School Psychology program. FSU’s doctoral program was the best fit for me because it allowed me to expand on my current repertoire of school psychology skills while providing me with a strong child/adolescent clinical training. Going into this program as a certified school psychologist with a year of work experience under my belt, certainly facilitated my success in the program as well. For instance, I was able to continue to practice school psychology on a contract base in several of FSU’s assessment clinics as well as teach undergraduate students. This not only provided me with valuable experience, but also provided me with funding opportunities while pursuing my degree.

Upon completion of my academic coursework, I relocated to south Florida to complete my pre-doctoral residency at Jackson Behavioral Health Hospital in the Child and Adolescent Clinical Track. There, I completed rotations in the Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program (SIPP: a 15 bed unit for adolescents presenting with severe psychopathology resulting in longer-term hospitalization ranging from 6 months up to a year), the child and adolescent crisis unit (a Baker Act receiving facility), and the psychiatry outpatient unit for children and adolescents. After completing my residency and while working on my dissertation, I was able to gain employment as a school psychologist working for MDCPS. Due to my clinical background, I was offered the unique opportunity to serve as a site-based school psychologist at an alternative educational setting. During this time, I became a licensed school psychologist and successfully defended my dissertation.

I am currently completing a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Miami’s Mailman Center for Child Development in the Parent-Child Interaction Therapy clinic, where I have had the unique opportunity to continue to strengthen my clinical training. I also hold an adjunct faculty position with Nova Southeastern University’s in their School Psychology Program.

In closing, I am certain that without the foundation and initial training I received at FIU’s program, I would not have had the ensuing success in both my academic and professional career. I think the wise words of another, once shared with me by FIU’s very own School Psychology Program Director, have resonated throughout my endeavors and I find it only fitting to close with these words. It was Ralph Waldo Emmerson initially once said, “It is one of the most beautiful compensations of life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.”
Alumni Spotlight—Sean Pascale, Ed.S.

I am the school psychologist at the Juvenile Detention Center School (DJJS) in Miami-Dade County. The Juvenile Detention Center and DJJS share a facility. The facility houses juvenile students between the ages of 12 and 18 who have gotten into trouble with the law. Students are housed here while they are awaiting their court decisions and have the legal right to a public education. They attend a fully functioning school during the day and return to their Modules afterwards.

Many of my responsibilities here are similar to that of a traditional school setting. I run re-evaluation meetings, coordinate and manage the Functional Assessments of Behavior (FAB) and Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP) for students, collaborate with administration and staff to ensure that students are receiving adequate accommodations or modifications, and administer psycho-educational evaluations. The majority of my time is spent either running counseling sessions with youth, coordinating with outside community agencies, or managing the high risk module. This is where individual students are sent that are either a danger to themselves or others, or are in danger due to gang affiliation or other circumstances.

I remember both Dr. Lazarus and Dr. Pham saying that they wanted me to start thinking like a psychologist. In this setting, that means really utilizing the Problem Solving Model. From lowering the recidivism rate, to reducing aggression in the classroom, I try to ask “what the observable behavior is and why,” “what is the baseline,” and “what are the definable and measurable goals,” etc. This helps me organize my actions to make sure that I am making a difference. One thing I am working on now is utilizing chess therapy to reduce aggression. It may work and it may not, but at least I will know either way. Feel free to contact me with any questions: seanpascale@dadeschools.net

Welcome New Students!

Daniella Quesada

My name is Daniella Quesada and I am 24 years old. I joined the School Psychology program in Spring 2016. I graduated from Florida International University with a Bachelor’s degree in Psychology in April 2014. I currently work as a Teacher Assistant at Fisher Island Day School. I teach a class of 4 and 5 year old students. For the summer I will be taking classes, working at the summer camp in my school, and traveling. My passion is educating, motivating, and challenging children to love learning. Through my experience, I have been able to assist children in reaching their full academic potentials by creating a personalized and unique learning environment for each child. When I am not working, I enjoy spending time with my family and friends and traveling.

(Continued on next page)
Welcome New Students! (continued)

Luciana Lorino

I was born in Arequipa, Peru and moved to the United States when I was 8 years old. I graduated from Florida International University with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Education and Sociology. When I began working at One on One Learning, I came became interested in the School Psychology program. One fun fact about myself is aside from the academics, I spend my free time going for runs around Miami and painting as a stress-reliever.

Diana Myles

Hello, my name is Diana Myles. I was born and raised in Miami. I am a U.S. Army veteran, wife, and mother of four. I graduated from FIU in Summer 2015 with Bachelor of Arts degrees in Psychology and Sociology. This summer I have started taking courses for the School Psychology program; in which, I'm truly excited to start my journey to become a school psychologist. Along with taking courses, I plan on enjoying the summer by going to the beach as much as possible and taking day trips. I love traveling, playing cards, socializing, and having cookouts. A fun fact about me would be that I love watching reality TV and the Wendy Williams talk show.

Johanna Jimenez

Hello my name is Johanna Jimenez, as a new student, I am excited and honored to be part of Florida International University’s School Psychology Program for Fall 2016. I graduated with my bachelors and Masters in Psychology with a major in Guidance Counseling from Carlos Albizu University. I am a mother of three beautiful boys. For this summer I am traveling to Cancun, Mexico with my family.

Fun fact: travel and spend time with friends and family.

Juan-Carlos Vélez

I graduated from FIU in 2012 with a Masters in Counseling Education. For this summer, I’ll be meeting with my family in Chicoutimi, Canada. I love traveling but I have two dogs, and my spouse and I, we have to pass on many plans. We love our two beagles, Cameron and Douglas.
About SPSA

The purpose of the SPSA organization 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. Please contact Silvana Newman (snewm001@fiu.edu) or Alexa Borroto (aborr023@fiu.edu) to join!

2016-2017 Executive Board Members

- President - Alexa Borroto
- Vice President - Sandra Ferret
- Treasurer - Christina Williams
- Secretary - Melonie Mendez
- Social Chair - Bianca Santacoloma
- CSO Representative (position open!)

School Psychology Program receives national accreditation!

The Educational Specialist (Ed.S) School Psychology program recently received approval with conditions from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) in February 2016. This recognition, combined with its state accreditation by the Florida Department, and the university’s accreditation by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP), makes the FIU School Psychology a nationally recognized program.

Starting this year, graduates of the program are eligible to become Nationally Certified School Psychologists (NCSP) upon passing the PRAXIS School Psychology Examination. As the only national standard of training for school psychologists, the NCSP brings national recognition to the recipients’ skills and credibility.

The conditional program highlights the general consistency of the School Psychology program with NASP standards while offering opportunity to ensure the program meets NASP standards in all areas by 2018. The School Psychology program was founded in 1972 and has graduated over 300 students, with many working all over the country. We thank the School Psychology faculty, Drs. Phil Lazarus, Andy Pham, and Martha Pelaez for their hard work!