# Inside the Issue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Message from SPSA President</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Student Publications</td>
<td>5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and Student Presentations</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice Corner</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FASP Conference Highlights</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASP Conference Highlights</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Leaders &amp; Awards</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2021-2022 Student E-Board</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr. Kellina Lupas - SPSA Faculty Advisor</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSA Committees</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSA Events</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate, Research &amp; Teaching Assistants</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2021 Interns</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship Experience</td>
<td>20-22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meet the First Years</td>
<td>24-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congratulations Graduates</td>
<td>28-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020-2021 Lessons Learned</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Life Updates</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPSA Pets</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hello faculty & friends!

I can't believe it's already been a year! The challenges that 2020 and 2021 have brought us were beyond what any of us could have anticipated. Last summer, not only were we at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic and remote learning, but we were also met with civil unrest that erupted following the murder of George Floyd (RIP <3).

In the face of these happenings, the executive board knew it was nonnegotiable to plan activities to keep everyone engaged and supported—even through our computer screens. We rose to the challenge and successfully coordinated events to connect with your peers through town halls, game nights, Nearpods discussions, professional developments, social justice talks and guest speakers. I cannot thank Denisse Gonzalez (Vice President), Alexis Davis (Secretary), Manoela Suarez (Treasurer), and Eugenia Romero (CSO representative) enough for all the creativity, work and effort you all have poured into the SPSA & our program.

This year our program also continued to grow in the best way. We welcomed an incredible group of new faculty members who have supported us every step of the way, and a new cohort of students who have been determined and hardworking. We revived and developed new committees and saw student leaders arise in their roles as committee chairpersons.

Together, we've endured summer courses, sociopolitical tension, an election year, school psychology conference season, practicum experiences, being stripped of our spring break, and the myriad of physical and emotional challenges that come with living during a global pandemic. But most of all, this year has showed us that we do not need physical proximity in order to make deep connections. We've laughed, cried, studied, learned and made lifelong friends through the lens of our Zoom screens, while effortlessly accomplishing our goals despite the encounters that came our way.

As we continue to transition back to campus and some sense of normalcy, I know that the incoming executive board is passionate and more than capable of taking the SPSA to new heights. The SPSA e-board and I are honored and grateful to have served our program and field this year. We wish you all a safe and successful 2021 - 2022 academic year!

With love & light,
Renee Bastian, President


Lazarus, P. J. & R. E. Cash (2021). We must be champions for the emotional well-being of our youth. In P. J. Lazarus, S. Suldo, & B. Doll (Eds.), Fostering the emotional well-being of our youth: A school-based approach (pp. 523-531). Oxford University Press


FACULTY & STUDENT PUBLICATIONS


Bastian, R., Zavalia, M., & Pham, A.V. (2021, February). Pre-service education professionals’ knowledge and perceptions about ADHD. Presented at the annual national convention of the National Association of School Psychologists.


SOCIAL JUSTICE CORNER
BY ALEXIS DAVIS

Chello!

I am Alexis Davis, the Social Justice Committee Chair of the 2020-2021 school year. 2020 was a rough year with the civil unrest and COVID-19 outbreak, and 2021 has not improved both situations by much; however, the Social Justice Committee has been able to keep our program engaged and informed through Social Justice Talks via Zoom.

The Social Justice committee is a student-led committee that discusses important and/or current issues and relates them to the field of school psychology. The committee has meetings to discuss these issues and plans events to involve the rest of the program in the discussion.

The committee aims to improve school psychology graduate students’ capacity to engage in advocacy to address social justice issues on local, state, and national levels (brought to you by Dr. Lazarus who started the committee).

As the social justice committee chair, I had the honor to serve with this committee and I am very excited to watch this committee expand, grow, and evolve.

“The mission of the committee is to promote non-discriminatory and equitable practices in school psychology to ensure the educational rights, opportunities, and well-being of all children and families—especially for those whose voices and experiences have been marginalized.”
The theme for the 2020 FASP Annual Conference was “Focus on the Future.” This conference highlighted how school psychologists can continue to provide services in unforeseen circumstances and support the ever-growing needs of students, families and educators across the state of Florida. The virtual conference was designed to allow attendees to experience critical traditional components of a FASP conference, such as exhibit space, a poster corner, annual business meeting, awards ceremony, networking opportunities, and the Children’s Services Fund, Inc. (CSFI) silent auction. Some of our fellow classmates and faculty had the opportunity to present virtually at the 2020 FASP Annual Conference.

2020 FASP PRESENTATIONS
NASP is the largest annual gathering of school psychologists and related professionals in the world. The convention included more than 1,000 educational presentations and special events related to education and mental health issues affecting children and youth. In the throes of COVID-19 and the rise of the advocacy for antiracist policies and procedures, the theme of the NASP 2021 virtual conference corresponded with these paramount issues, “The Power of Possibility.” The focus for this conference was to provide resources and identify possible solutions to common problems found in the field of school psychology and education. Keynote speaker, Steve Gross, MSW, discussed the relationship between caregivers and educators and using the power of optimism to build and strengthen relationships with the children and youth. Participants were able to attend presentations, network, and engage with one another through the Whova Event App.

2021 NASP PRESENTATIONS

Integrating Social Justice Advocacy and Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Graduate Training
Presented by:
Andy V. Pham, PhD
Philip Lazarus, PhD
Renee Bastian
Quenitee Dong
Monika Lopez
February 2021

Pre-Service Education Professionals’ Knowledge and Perceptions of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
Presented by:
Renee Bastian, Milagros Zavala & Andy Pham, PhD
NASP Convention
February 2021

Cultural Considerations in Promoting Social-Emotional Learning with K-12 Students
Presented by:
Quenitee Dong
Milagros Zavala
Allana Murakos
Jennifer Lopez
Hyrc E Díaz-Campos
Andy V. Pham, PhD.
STUDENT LEADERS & AWARDS

SPSA President-Elect
Elisa Valle

SPSA President
Renee Bastian

Student Resilience Award: Recognized for Her “Grit” & Resilience
Joelishia Banfield

Patty Del Valle Humanitarian Award
Renee Bastian

NASP Student Representatives
Alexis Davis
Eugenia Romero

FASP Graduate Studies Award-Specialist Level
Quennie Dong

2020–2021 CASE Graduate Student Award in Academic Achievement
Byron Garcia
Renee Bastian
Quennie Dong

FASP Student Representative, Student Advocacy Leader
Elisa Valle

FACULTY AWARDS

Division 16 Jack Bardon Distinguished Service Award
Dr. Philip Lazarus

SPSA Zoom Superstar
Dr. Shayl Griffith

SPSA Most Supportive
Dr. Amanda Allen

SPSA Mentor of the YEAR
Dr. Andy Pham

SPSA All Seeing Eye Award
Dr. Martha Peleaz

SPSA Rockstar Rookie
Dr. Kellina Lupas
Dear students, we are so excited to take on these roles and make the 2021-2022 school year the best yet. Most importantly, we want to focus on engagement and creating a sense of community within our program. Throughout the school year, we will be planning several fun, educational, and community-based activities for everyone to attend and enjoy. SPSA should be an organization in which everyone feels important and heard, so we welcome you to join us in making this a successful year!

ELISA VALLE  
SPSA PRESIDENT

ISABEL GUARAGNA  
SPSA VICE PRESIDENT

EDWIN ALVAREZ  
SPSA SECRETARY

GISELL RODRIGUEZ  
SPSA TREASURER

BRITTANY SEALY  
SPSA RSO REPRESENTATIVE
I am immensely excited to work with our student leaders to coordinate events, training opportunities, and support.

Over the year I have been with the School Psychology program at FIU, I have come to deeply value and appreciate our students. They are some of the most hard-working, determined, and resilient people I have ever met. School psychology attracts helpers, and our students are preparing to be some of the best. I believe that fostering the capability of youth (whether in age or in adopting a new vocation!) is one of the most direct ways that we, as faculty, can inspire change within our schools and communities. As the new faculty advisor for our school psychology student association, I am immensely excited to work with our student leaders to coordinate events, training opportunities, and support. In its best iteration, the SPSA can profoundly expand our students' social network, developing collaborations for classwork, social support, community engagement, and career development. I appreciate this opportunity, and will work diligently to show our students the same energy, enthusiasm, and creativity that they demonstrate in our program!
SPSA Committees

**SOCIETY & EVENTS**

This student-led committee brings awareness to important and/or current issues related to school psychology and the people we serve. This committee works together to plan events for SPSA members to become involved in important discussions.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

The public relations committee is dedicated to bringing awareness about events, projects, and anything SPSA! Additionally, this committee is responsible for all SPSA social media handles and Panther Connect event flyers.

**SCHOLARSHIP**

Previous SPSA students have greatly benefited from scholarships. The scholarship committee is responsible for browsing scholarship opportunities in and outside of FIU.

**SOCIAL & EVENTS**

The social events committee is passionate about working in and around Miami communities or organizations. This committee not only develops opportunities for students to be of services to others but also plans fun FIU and/or SPSA events.
SPSA EVENTS

**Doctoral Study in Psychology Panel**

- **When:** March 16th, 2021
- **Time:** 3:30 PM
- **Zoom Meeting ID:** 954 0210 3965

Open to all FIU students

**STRESS AND ANXIETY MANAGEMENT FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS**

WITH FIU'S COUNSELING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES AND DR. PHILIP LAZARUS

- **March 1st @ 4pm**

Open to all FIU students

**FIU SPSA TOWN HALL**

- **Thursday, January 14th**
- **3:45PM - 5:00PM**
- **Meeting ID:** 953 8074 4976

Open to all FIU Students

**THANKSGIVING DRIVE**

- **November 2-23**
- **Drop-off locations:**

**VISION BOARD BRUNCH**

- **November 21 @12pm**
I love the opportunity to engage in research that aligns with my interests, and to network with other professionals in psychology and education!

-RENEE BASTIAN

Being able to assist parents with providing extra homework supports for their children is one of the many reasons why I enjoy being a GA.

-EDWIN ALVAREZ

I love being able to apply what I learn in class into my lesson plan so I can have an inclusive classroom that addresses different learning styles to help first generation college students.

-GISELL RODRIGUEZ
2021-2022 Interns

**ASHLEY HANSON**
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**EUGENIA ROMERO**
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**RACHEL CASANAS**
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**RENEE BASTIAN**
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**SARAH ABULKHEIR**
BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MARIO CAMPOS**
COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**DENISSE GONZALEZ**
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ALEXANDRA ARANGO**
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**MATTHEW NETTINA**
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

**ALEXIS DAVIS**
PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS

**ALEXANDRA LUMARQUE**
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

**ATHENA MAVRAKIS**
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY

**MANOELA SUAREZ**
SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY
MY INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE

BY TARA FITZGERALD, ED.S

I was lucky enough to find a placement with the Minnesota Consortium of School Psychologists Internships (MCSPI), which is associated with the University of Minnesota (UMN). I was compelled to apply for the consortium because I am a Minnesota native, and I attended UMN for my undergraduate studies. MCSPI placed me with KIPP Minnesota, a charter school in North Minneapolis run by a nationwide non-profit network of public charter schools.

Shortly after making the decision to move across the country, the nation fell into a crisis. Class meetings on campus turned into discussions over zoom. Nonverbal communication was greatly limited; now we could silently send a few options of “reaction” emojis to describe how we were feeling about something someone shared.

Then, on May 25th, George Floyd was murdered in Minneapolis. This sparked an international antiracist movement, and large questions about policing policy reform. There was an uprising in the city where I was about to go. Some of my friends and new colleagues described their protest battle stories while others were too scared to leave their apartments for fear of contracting COVID. The entire world watched.

A lot of locations were closed or under curfew. Although I felt lonely, it seemed like the most responsible option to stay in my home unless I acquired necessary items like groceries or to exercise. I took up biking around my neighborhood in the evenings and zoom fitness classes through the FIU rec center. As I prepared to leave, all of my Miami bucket list items were no longer options. I was unable to properly say goodbye to my classmates and professors, and many of my friends.
I drove across the country, with all of my belongings packed inside of my car, during a pandemic. I arrived in Minnesota and met all of my new colleagues covering half of my face and avoiding handshakes. It all felt tremendously awkward. Many colleagues built rapport by sharing the stories of their summer protests, describing teargas or run-ins with the national guard. The gym was decorated with several murals, painted by students, related to the Black Lives Matter movement. Teachers wore BLM shirts and masks and decorated their classrooms with posters supporting the movement. Our KIPP uniform shirt donned a quote that read, “If you are neutral during situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.”

Through MCSPI, I was able to participate in their semi-weekly meetings and didactic sessions along with a cohort of students at UMN who were completing internships around the nation as Ed.S. or Ph.D. students. We had extensive case consultation and shared useful resources with each other. Many of our discussions focused on social justice, and we read books based on abolitionist teaching.

I quickly discovered that many of my colleagues (and even school leadership) did not quite understand what a school psychologist’s role entailed. Because the charter school was in its first year of operation, a lot of the roles had not been clearly defined.

Luckily there is another KIPP school in Minneapolis, and they have been in operation for several years. Their MCSPI intern last year was now their full-time school psychologist, so she could share a lot of details about the students, staff, and the consortium requirements. We spent the first few weeks of school going through our inventory of protocols and test kits. Our school chooses to use the KABC-II because it has the smallest racial disparities, and can also provide the Mental Processing Index (MPI) that includes four broad abilities but eliminates the Gc Knowledge index, which is heavily loaded with language and culture.

The first few weeks of school were heavily focused on following COVID protocols on sanitization, social distancing, and proper mask wearing. Our primary school students were in hybrid mode, with half of the class attending school for two full days per week. Our middle school students were fully distant, but they came to school once a week for “orientation” and material pick-up. Building rapport with students and families happened while sanitizing our hands and checking our temperatures at the front door.

I was given the list of students whom I would evaluate over the course of the year, and the number seemed so small. However, as the year progressed, we acquired many more students from new enrollment. Our sister school has a reputation in the area for being ideal for students with extensive services in their IEPs. Many students transferred from our sister school, and they were familiar with some of the teachers in the middle school who also made the switch. Many other students transferred from other charter schools, and getting proper documentation of previous evaluations or IEPs was often a fruitless task.
I was tasked with planning, writing, editing and finalizing evaluations and organizing deadlines for other service providers to input their portions. I monitored progress, wrote behavior intervention plans and created new goals for IEPs.

Working in a first-year charter school had its challenges. Systems for evaluation and intervention were essentially nonexistent, and by the time the fall screening measures had identified students who would be ideal candidates for intervention, our school leaders were instead focused on preparing to shift our students to a fully distant model through the long winter months. We had several model shifts over the course of the year. For several weeks, all students were set to return in-person before spring break, but a spike in numbers caused us to change our plan three days before their return date.

Due to the stress and unpredictability of model shifts, our school also experienced a lot of staff turnover. However, this allowed me to experience a plethora of roles as a school psychologist intern; I also took on the responsibilities of a school social worker and an interventionist. These experiences allowed me to learn a variety of skills through direct service to students and families.

I performed one full cycle of online literacy interventions with first and second graders. Some students lacked a working microphone or a stable internet connection. Some students had issues with attendance, or would become distracted and leave their desks. Others were merely unresponsive black boxes with only their name displayed. Some students chose to come to school in-person, which made interventions much more simple in their planning and implementation, but some students chose to remain online. Unsurprisingly, those who came in-person showed much better progress than their online counterparts.

It was a year unlike any other, but I can say that I now feel prepared for any challenge ahead. Your internship year will be exciting, as it is filled with so many opportunities for growth and continued learning. Here are some pieces of advice that I’d wish I had known on my first day of internship:

- Problems don’t need to be solved immediately. It is okay to take time to make a good decision as opposed to a quick decision. Internship is a marathon, not a sprint!
- Everything feels huge the first time you deal with it, so allow yourself time to learn! Confidence will grow with experience.
- No one expects you to know everything, don’t be afraid to admit that you are still learning. You are allowed to ask questions. You can respond with, “I don’t know the answer right now, but I’ll get back to you on that.”
- Manage tasks one day at a time, and make daily or weekly to-do lists.
- Take your lunch break and try to leave work at work.
- Switch tasks and come back to whatever you feel stuck on. Sometimes changing what you do can help you move-on from other tasks.
- Develop a routine for when you fill out routine paperwork (e.g., organize hours at the end of each day, etc.) and block off writing time on your calendar.
- Spreadsheets with timelines and deadlines! Then back these up with calendar reminders for you and related colleagues.
2021-2022 INCOMING STUDENTS

PRISCILLA ALFARO

B.S. in Psychology from Florida International University
Where are you from?: Miami, FL
Interests: Painting and writing
Why School Psychology? To help as many kids as possible. I’ve always wanted to work with kids and try to have a positive impact in their lives as much as possible and I believe I can do that by being a School Psychologist.

SAMANTHA CASANOVA

B.A. in Psychology from State University of New York at New Paltz
Where are you from?: New York
Interests: Yoga, reading, and dancing.

YIUSALIN DEL CUADRO

A.A. from Miami-Dade College & B.S. in Psychology from University of Miami
Where are you from? Cuba and Miami, FL
Interests: I enjoy road trips, spending time with my family and listening to music.
Why School Psychology? I am passionate about guiding children and adolescents successfully through developmental, social-emotional and mental health issues. It takes a team to work through the process of establishing, implementing and monitoring progress for the specific needs of these students. Therefore, I plan to work collaboratively with teachers and other involved personnel to facilitate a conducive, academic and social-emotional learning environment. Throughout this process my goal is to provide each individual student with the tools they need to succeed in school and in life.
2021-2022 INCOMING STUDENTS

JILLIAN DELISLE
B.A. in Psychology from La Salle University
Where are you from?: Orlando, FL
Interests: Going to the beach, playing sports and hang out with friends.
Why School Psychology? I want to be a school psychologist because I have always had a love for school and school psychologists are the ones that make school a safe nurturing environment for children of all backgrounds and abilities. Children are the future and deserve to be set up for success.

GABRIELA GONZALEZ
B.S. in Psychology from University of Central Florida
Where are you from?: Miami, FL
Interests: Reading, taking photos, and hiking.
Why School Psychology? As a school psychologist my goal is to work in the Miami-Dade County school system servicing at risk students. I want to work with school personnel, and parents to find the best way to help students achieve their full potential by addressing educational needs, individual concerns, and unique family dynamics.

SOLOMON KAMARA
B.S. in Psychology from Valparaiso University
Where are you from? Born in Sierra Leone, grew up in Chicago suburbs
Interests: Working out, going out with friends, spending time with family, learning about people and where they come from.
Why School Psychology? To uplift students that struggle and are discouraged when it comes to their mental health, social–emotional health, and their education.

SHANIYA MORRIS
B.A. in Psychology and Sociology & M.S. in Developmental Psychology
Where are you from?: New York
Interests: Reading, binge watching TV shows and docuseries.
Why School Psychology? After 6 months of being an ABA therapist, I watched one of my clients flourish into a high performing Kindergartener. This experience embedded a passion for working with children and the desire to help them conquer their academic, social, and emotional challenges within the school setting.
2021-2022 INCOMING STUDENTS

ERIN PIERAGOWSKI
B.S. in Psychology and Education from Florida Gulf Coast University
Where are you from? Kentucky
Interests: Working out, roller skating, tennis, hanging with my friends, family, and cat.
Why School Psychology? I grew up with a sister constantly struggling in school both with staff and students not being able to understand her or have the patience for her. I’ve always wanted to be that person that can intervene and be that person to support them when no one else can.

WILLIAM WILSON
B.S. in Psychology from Florida State University
Where are you from? Longwood, FL
Interests: Coin collecting, reading about History.
Why School Psychology? I want to be a school psychologist to help children succeed academically and socially. My college experience caused me to consider the question of whether there is a better method to help children with learning difficulties integrate into the classroom in a way that challenges them in an inviting and friendly manner.

DAMIAN HAWKINS
B.S. in English Education from Florida State University
M.S. in Counseling from Florida Atlantic University
Where are you from? South Florida
Interests: I enjoy watching plays and movies.
Why School Psychology? I am interested in exploring the school psychologist’s role in addressing the increasing rates of academic suspensions affecting children of color and the school psychologist’s role in addressing the academic and psychosocial functioning of the children of addicted parents.
Go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good.

MINOR MYERS JR.
2020-2021 Lessons Learned

Zoom learning has pros and cons, resting is just as (if not more) important than working, even if you're an introvert, isolation isn't that cool and you need friends!

The main lesson that I learned during this school year was to set aside some time for mental health.

There are many things the I learned during the 2020-2021 school year but the most important would have to be cherished and spend time with our families as well as prioritizing our mental health.

I learned how critical it is to be grateful for every day of health, to appreciate the people I'm fortunate enough to have in my life, and to give myself a break from time to time.

I learned not to take the most important aspects of life for granted. We are not promise tomorrow, so take a chance and go on an adventure. Carpe Diem (Seize the Day)!

This year has brought many lessons. The most important lesson learned is that things may not always go according to your plan and that is okay.

This year I learned that it's okay to prioritize yourself! Self care is non-negotiable in order to be happy & healthy.

It's okay if you're not your best because we're in a pandemic... even if we weren't, you can't expect to always give your best because then that'll be your "normal."

1. Take no time for granted and to start doing the things I have always said I wanted to do.  
2. Our world and the people in it are more adaptable than we think!
Student Life Updates

EDWIN ALVAREZ
GOT ENGAGED!

ISA GUARAGNA
STARTED COMPETING IN SAILING WITH HER DAD!

ALEXIS DAVIS
NEW PINK BRAIDS!

RENE BASTIAN
NEW PUPPY JASPER!

ELISA VALLE
GOT MARRIED ON THE BEACH!

MANOELA SUAREZ
FAMILY TRIP TO THE WEST COAST!

IBIS MENDOZA
CREATING MEMORIES WITH FAMILY!

SAMANTHA MENDA
GOT MARRIED ON THE BEACH!
SPSA PETS