

FORENSIC FORUM

APRIL 4, 2008

THE FORENSIC PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL PROGRAM: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE BY PROF. MICHELE GALIETTA

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I am so pleased to have been asked to write this piece for the student newsletter. I have given considerable thought to the format and decided that this is the perfect time for a "state of the program" statement. Admittedly, it pales a bit compared to the current "state of the state" here in NY which has been front-page news (at least in papers that open like books) for the last several weeks. Nevertheless, it is an exciting time in the development of the Forensic Psychology Ph.D. Program. Almost every discussion at John Jay begins with the statement, "In the past...". While we have only been in existence as a program for a very short time, already there is considerable history. Dr. O'Connor created this vision and recruited faculty with the hope and dream that this program would exist and would be the best collection of psychology/law faculty in the country. I still have a vivid memory of interviewing here and visiting Dr. Steve Penrod, Distinguished Professor, in his office. He was wearing gloves and a cap as his office was less than 60 degrees at the time. I remember asking him, "Do you really think it will be possible to do research in this environment? His answer, "Definitely possible...easy, no." And so Drs. Zapf, Groscup, Raghavan and I signed on to come to John Jay at a time of incredible change. The College and the Department was changing dramatically. The existing faculty had made a decision to shift focus toward a more research-oriented faculty and curriculum. They made hiring decisions with this shift in mind, but also with a strong commitment to continue the

Department's very applied roots and connections to forensic settings in the city and country, including the FBI. All of this was necessary in order for the Doctoral Program, as we know it today, to develop.

For some of you who are new to John Jay, you may not know that we all owe a considerable debt to Dr. Barbara Stanley who brought this program into existence. Barbara not only wrote the initial proposal for the program, she also shepherded it through all of the various CUNY and NY state boards for approval. The more I learn about these systems, the more I am thoroughly impressed that she accomplished this feat. Dr. Stanley administered the program in its infancy and, just before leaving, she added the experimental psychology and law track and succeeded in obtaining New York State (and CUNY) approval for that as well. She passed the program into the hands of Dr. Margaret Kovera who built upon the strong foundation that existed. Dr. Kovera succeeded in reducing the substantial teaching load that was required for our students to receive funding.

From the start, this was the little program that could...There was initial support from President Jerry Lynch, who happened to be a clinical psychologist and an avid supporter of applied interdisciplinary foren-

sic research. The National Catholic Bishops Study that examined child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church put John Jay on the national map as a forensic research institution. President Lynch obtained the contract for this research and also wrote the initial letter of support for our new program to be started.

Then, there was a search for a new president and we all waited with baited breath to see if it would be someone who would continue to support the dream of this program. We were extremely pleased to find that President Jeremy Travis had agreed to take on the task of transforming John Jay. His goal for the college was to make it the preeminent research institution in the fields of criminal justice and forensic psychology. From the start, President Travis met with Dr. Stanley and others to plan and support this program. He made the unprecedented offer to support all incoming students with tuition and a full-stipend. This allowed us to recruit outstanding students. In addition, we are one of the few schools to be fortunate enough to have a donor, who *directly* supports our program. Without a doubt, this has allowed us to develop into an outstanding program very rapidly. Donor funds have supported research grants, testing supplies, speaker funds, and much needed pizza when times get tough!

We admitted our first class of students with a promise of tuition and stipends. Those in this class will figuratively (and at times, literally) tell you that they walked a mile each way to school in the snow. They had courses all over CUNY, taught two full courses each per semester and had to deal with all the bumps inherent in a new program. We did warn people ahead of time, and I think most will say they knew what they were getting themselves into, but that they really wanted the best education possible in the area of forensic psychology and they believed that John Jay would provide that.

We recently made offers of acceptance to our fifth incoming class of students. A recent candidate applied to Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, and John Jay, and at this point, she is coming for a second round of interviews to make her decision. This speaks volumes for what we have been able to accomplish.

The Executive Committee of the Forensic Psychology Program, chaired by Dr. Groscup, has been extremely proactive about making positive changes and responding to student input. Backed by analyses by Dr. Penrod, and the support of the President and Provost, we have been successful in dramatically increasing the number of courses we are able to offer each semester. This increases the quality of the courses you are able to take and decreases travel to other CUNY campuses.

I'd like to speak a bit about the clinical arm of the program. The first Director of Clinical Training, Dr. Patricia Zapf, has taken on the role of heading up the accreditation effort. Dr. Zapf and I have spent many hours working on various aspects of the program with accreditation in mind. We are on target to finish the self study by the end of summer this year. We plan to have a consultant do a mock site visit and interview next year, and

then to apply for accreditation the following year. We have just reached a major milestone as three of our students, Virginia Barber-Rioja, Samantha Miller, and Graznya Kusmierska applied and all matched for internship. This is proof that, despite all the foibles that are an eventuality in the start-up of a new program, our students are receiving good training and are performing at a high level.

I realize that this sounds like one big, John-Jay-aggrandizing description of our program and I guess that it is. At times, I really am shocked at what we have. On a daily basis, we are confronted with the realities of North Hall and faced with all that we still need to do (and there is a lot of work to be done). However, one only needs to look at the most recent AP-LS Conference Program to see all that we have accomplished. Our students are truly rising stars in the field. They are publishing, receiving national grants

and training awards, serving as editorial assistants on scholarly journals and holding offices in key professional organizations.

Working in collaboration with our new Academic Director, Dr. Roberta Blotner, the new things on the horizon we are currently working on include: improving our relationship with the Graduate Center in order to remedy the financial aid/loan disbursement problems we have been experiencing, seeking additional ways to decrease service obligations for students, hosting more wonderful speakers, adding regular case conferences, and of course, more work towards accreditation. But while all this looms, let me just take this one moment to say "wow!" And, thank you so much to the faculty for all your hard work. To the students, I am constantly impressed with your dedication and hard work. Thank you so much for being wonderful ambassadors of our program.

STUDENT COLUMN:

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM SURVIVAL TIPS

By **Tarika D. Kapur & Megan Schaffer**

When you think of comprehensive exams, the first thing that comes to mind is, "How am I going to prepare for these with everything else that is going on?!" Although it may seem like a daunting task, taken one step at a time, it is highly doable. Below are some tips and guidelines for preparing for the comprehensive exams.

◆ **Tip 1:** Bring snacks. You will probably feel like you don't have time to take a break and you will be hungry.

◆ **Tip 2:** Treat yourself. For instance, the day before the exam I put everything away and went for a massage.

◆ **Tip 3:** Don't stress--The questions truly were reasonable.

◆ **Tip 4:** Know your applied ps & qs. So, for clinical students, know how you would apply what you know to designing research or conducting therapy or an assessment.

◆ **Tip 5:** Along those lines, know your limits. For those of you in Diversity, you've been asked to think a lot about the assumptions you bring to any interaction or situation. And, you know that it's ethical to

respect these. So, what does that mean for you when interacting with different clients?

◆ **Tip 6:** And remember, as much as we hate to say it, this really is a great learning opportunity and a way to synthesize the many pieces of information that have been thrown at all of us over the past years. We guarantee you that at the end you will have a better perspective and more knowledge and understanding about the field of Psychology.

**Plus, if you look at it this way the whole process will be less painful.*

(Continued on next page...)

"...one only needs to look at the most recent AP-LS Conference Program to see all that we have accomplished. Our students are truly rising stars in the field."
-Prof. Michele Galletta

◆ **Tip 7:** Work with others taking the exam when prepping.

Finally, we'd like to share some of the basic guidelines so you have a heads up on what the rules were for us:

1. The exam is from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can take a one hour lunch break at any point.

2. The exam is typed. A computer will be provided, but you need to bring in a blank thumb drive to save your work to.

3. You are allowed to take in a notes binder with typed material that is self-generated, i.e. you can't take in any original source material.

4. For experimental students, there are four areas of competencies that are assessed – theory, methods, diversity, and ethics. You have a choice between two questions under each topic. For clinical students, there is also a choice about which questions you answer.

There is no word limit on your responses, but a sufficient answer will be anywhere between 2-4 pages.

Good luck to any of those who plan to write their comps in the near future!

~ Tarika (*experimental*) and Megan (*clinical*) are both completing their third year.

A FLASH AND A FAREWELL

Well, here we are. It is hard to believe that: *our fourth and final issue of Forensic Forum, Volume 1; April; our first cohort of students getting jobs and internships; and our FIFTH incoming class IS ALL HERE!* Time has gone by in a flash, and as such, we will ALL begin the transition to the "next phase". The inimitability of a doctoral program lies in the fact that each year is different, and most, if not all of us will contemporaneously grow personally and professionally during our time at John Jay.

We hope we have honored the mission of *Forensic Forum*: 'to provide the student body with the most updated and accurate information available to the FPDSC, while fostering a feeling of community and commitment to its members'.

It was a pleasure to serve as your Editorial Board. Please join us in welcoming the incoming 2008-2009 board: Sarah Kopelovich (Editor-In-Chief), Stephen Smith (Associate Editor), and Alexis Murray-Forbes (Production & Design Manager).

We are confident they will help take *FF* to the next level. Please provide them with the same support and warmth you have given us.

Thank you and be well.

Gianni Pirelli, Jen Tallon, & Jordan Maile

2007-2008 *Forensic Forum* Editorial Board

..”no matter how full your life may seem, there’s always room for a couple cups of coffee with a friend.”

Author Unknown

The Mayonnaise Jar and 2 Cups of Coffee Author Unknown

When things in life seem almost too much to handle, when 24 hours in a day are not enough, remember the mayonnaise jar and the 2 cups of coffee.

A professor stood before his philosophy class and had some items in front of him. When the class began, he wordlessly picked up a very large and empty mayonnaise jar and proceeded to fill it with golf balls. He then asked the students if the jar was full. They agreed that it was.

The professor then picked up a box of pebbles and poured them into the jar. He shook the jar lightly. The pebbles rolled into the open areas between the golf balls. He then asked the students again if the jar was full. They agreed it was.

The professor next picked up a box of sand and poured it into the jar. Of

course, the sand filled up everything else. He asked once more if the jar was full. The students responded with a unanimous “yes”.

The professor then produced two cups of coffee from under the table and poured the entire contents into the jar, effectively filling the empty space between the sand. The students laughed.

“Now,” said the professor as the laughter subsided, “I want you to recognize that this jar represents life. The gold balls are the important things – God, your family, your children, your health, your friends and your favorite passions – and if everything else was lost and only they remained, your life would still be full. The pebbles are the other things that matter like your business/or job, your house and your

car. The sand is everything else – the small stuff. “If you put the sand into the jar first,” he continued, “there is no room for the pebbles or the golf balls. The same goes for life. If you spend all of your time and energy on the small stuff, you will never have room for the things that are important to you.”

“Pay attention to the things that are critical to your happiness. Play with your children. Spend time with your parents. Visit with grandparents. Take time to get medical checkups. Take your spouse out to dinner. Play games. There will always be time to clean the house and fix the disposal. Take care of the golf balls first – the things that really matter. Set your priorities.

The rest is just sand.”

One of the students raised her hand and inquired what the coffee represented. The professor smiled. “I’m glad you asked. It just goes to show you that no matter how full your life may seem, there’s always room for a couple cups of coffee with a friend.”



BIRTHDAY WATCH

APRIL

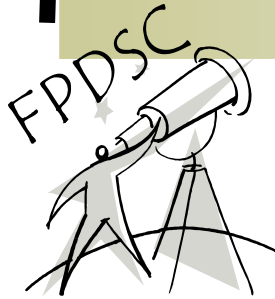
3 - Kean M.
5 - Sarah K.
24 - Virginia B.

MAY

15 - Blair M.
28 - Steve S.

JUNE

3 - Marsha B.
11 - Elise L.
23 - Brian



JULY

8 - Gianni P.
21 - Anthony P.
22 - Jordan M.
22 - Christian M.
31 - Martin K.

AUGUST

4 - Jen T.
23 - Megan S.

**' WORKING WITH EACH OTHER ,
FOR EACH OTHER '**

Forensic Forum is a publication of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Student Council (FPDSC) intended to provide the student body of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Program with information relevant to the program and the field. The FPDSC was developed in 2004 and *Forensic Forum* followed in 2007.

Forensic Forum's mission is to provide the student body with the most updated and accurate information available to the FPDSC, while fostering a feeling of community and commitment to its members.

We are committed to the success of the Forensic Psychology Doctoral Program and its students.

AP-LS: A GREAT SUCCESS

The annual conference of the American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) in Jacksonville this year was an amazing experience for all of us who attended. As Dr. Galietta noted in her cover article (this issue), our program's representation at the conference was, once again, amazing! Here is a look at some of the numbers:

- ◆ Total number of presentations by John Jay affiliates = 41
- ◆ Total number of individual John Jay presenters = 56
- ◆ Total # of presentations = 309
- ◆ Total # of symposiums: 88 % of presentations JJAY = ~13%
- ◆ Total number of posters presented by John Jay affiliates = 19
- ◆ Total number of John Jay individual poster authors/co-authors = 40
- ◆ Total number of posters Saturday and Friday = 182 % of all posters JJAY = ~10%

- ◆ Total number of sessions with JJAY chairs/discussants = 16
- ◆ Total number of individual John Jay Chairs/Discussants = 13

In addition, our program is well represented at the administrative level of AP-LS:

- ◆ Dr. Margaret Bull Kovera (President)
 - ◆ Dr. Saul Kassin (President-Elect)
 - ◆ Dr. Patricia A. Zapf (Secretary)
 - ◆ Dr. Jen Groscup (Council & Newsletter Editor)
 - ◆ Dr. Roslyn Caldwell (Chair, Minority Affairs Committee)
 - ◆ Gianni Pirelli (Chair-Elect, Student Section)
- Keep up the great work! Anticipate the October 2008 deadline for next year's conference in San Antonio and stay informed about new information and initiatives set forth by both AP-LS (ap-ls.org) and the AP-LS Student Section: aplsstudentsection.com

PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENTS

- ◆ FPDSC elections are coming in MAY... we welcome all to consider running for positions they are eligible for! Note: Tarika and Tina are NOT running for a third term!
- ◆ TA Issues such as scheduling problems and policing of classrooms are being addressed with the administration.
- ◆ Problems with the course content of some courses were raised by students and these courses are being monitored and suggestions for changes will be made if needed.
- ◆ Building Access issues are being addressed with the administration

COMPREHENSIVE EXAM ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- ◆ Reading list will remain the same for the August 08 exam, but will be revised for the January 09 exam
- ◆ Starting with the August 08 exam, however, questions will be revised to reflect specific APA competencies and will not be similar to this past exam

