



**School Psychology Graduate Program
Advisory Board Virtual Meeting
April 6, 2020**

Mission Statement

The WCU School Psychology graduate program will produce high quality graduates who *solve problems* through data-based decision making; *lead change* at the individual and systems level; and respectfully and collaboratively *support others*.

School Psychology Planning Committee

Director: Lori Unruh, Ph.D.
Candace Boan-Lenzo, Ph.D.
Ethan Schilling, Ph.D.

Advisory Board Members

Lisl Whitted, Henderson County
Marquessa Hotchkiss, Buncombe County
Alice Wellborn, Transylvania County Retired
Catherine Gantt, Swain County Retired
Cindy Phipps, Jackson County
Melinda Rogers, Haywood County
Stephanie Stiles, Macon County
Susan Wilson, Yancey County Retired
Carole Sorrenti, WCU Adjunct
Kathleen Armstrong, WCU Adjunct

Advisory Board Student Representatives

Nicole Zelhofer, 2nd year cohort
Vanessa Salazar, 1st year cohort

Participants in this meeting are encouraged to review the Advisory Board Update provided to the members December 2019. Additional information and updates have been provided below. In addition, there have been big changes recently as the university has gone online and school systems have shut down. We greatly appreciate the members of our Advisory Board meeting with us to help us address ongoing program needs.

Based on the updates provided, we would like to engage in the following discussions during our virtual meeting. Additionally, thoughts can be sent prior to the meeting or after the meeting and those will be included here as well:

1. Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic

- a. Is there anything our program or students can do to help support school systems through the rest of this school year?
- b. What do you anticipate being the biggest need when schools open up in the Fall (or whenever)?
 - i. How do you anticipate this impacting the placement of our Practicum and Internship students?
- c. What are some long-term implications of the current school shut-down and how should we be addressing this in our training?

Advisory Board Feedback:

While it is appreciated, it would be difficult to provide support when we are unable to perform the most essential duties given this situation

I would anticipate that the greatest need will be handling the “back-log” of assessments.

One of the biggest needs for special education administrators will be determining which students are in need of compensatory education due to the impact of COVID-19

Determining how to make decisions about SLD with the new MTSS only policy after a break from normal instruction will also be a challenge - Yes! Ruling out “lack of appropriate instruction” now has an added complication now one could have expected.

Some psychologists may be more willing to take on an intern that is “well-trained” and can assist with the assessments. However, in general, I think that it could negatively impact placements especially for practicum students as most will be feeling overwhelmed by the need to get caught up and finish the assessments that were missed during the pandemic.

Discuss ways to handle situation such as this - how can we develop ways for psychologists to continue to function in their roles as effectively as possible, what do we do upon the return to the “norm” and we are months behind on assessments and others continue to come in, etc?

When looking at data for evaluations, how do we determine if the student continued to progress when they weren’t given the interventions in the same manner and were not receiving the same level of classroom based instruction? (especially given that some are participating only minimally, if at all in the virtual instruction)

Additional trauma experienced by students due to the extra stress at home: family dynamics, food shortages. Will need to do critical incident debriefing. May be able to use school psychology students to come in to do data collection to help the systems get a handle on what students need academically and let school psychologists focus on social emotional needs (more consistency will be needed)

Training in telehealth for social emotional sessions that students could offer on an ongoing basis; also parent training

How will this change the way we lead teams in looking at data? Did all students progress or regress or maintain skills during this time?

How can we address students' social-emotional needs related to school shutdown and COVID-19 on a systems or school level?

I think we are going to see a broad impact. Many of our families will have a loss of income, which may impact a student's housing and living situation. Even though our teachers have worked tirelessly to support our students academically, I think that we are going to see a significant loss in academic instruction. I have a kindergarten student and worry that I am not providing him the academic instruction he needs, and I speculate that many parents will not be able to even provide the level of instruction that I am. I also worry about the trauma that many students will be exposed to. Many of our students are victim and/or witness to abuse and/or neglect at home. When schools reopen, I am afraid about keeping up with our evaluations that have been paused, have gone out of compliance, and the evaluations that will continue to be due. I fear that we will receive many requests for evaluations. I think that it will be very hard to document adequate instruction for students over this time of remote learning. We will also see a loss of and gap in progress monitoring data.

2. General Preparation of SSP Candidates

- a. Is the recent restructuring of our curriculum going to provide adequate training for candidates to enter the field prepared?
- b. Are there any school level demands on school psychologists that we need to be aware of in developing our instruction?
- c. What can districts do to keep our graduates in North Carolina?

Advisory Board Feedback:

Districts vary in their expectations with regard to the role of the school psychologist. However, It is essential that psychologists can communicate and interact with others effectively. I think it is important that they understand the importance of working as a team. Although they may be the "expert" in one area, someone else is the "expert" in another. With the continued increase in behavior referrals, it is essential that students have knowledge of functional behavior assessments, manifestation determinations, etc.

They need to know the full process (including the paperwork) and not just evaluations & reports.

School psychology students should also be familiar with state mandated screeners (e.g. mClass, iStation) and know how to utilize this data to look at MTSS - they need training not just in interventions for individual students, but how to look at class, grade level, and school wide data to determine needs, evaluated programs as a whole (is the whole class or grade level struggling? - if so what can be done about this) and determine which students may need additional assessments and/or specialized instruction

Graduates are drawn to different things, but most are going to follow the money. It is essential to continue to advocate for continued increases in salaries in this state.

However, some are going to stay here because of family ties, etc. Keep them connected with key school psychs in districts in the area/region they are interested in.

Evaluations from Clinic: make sure parents are clear regarding difference between DSM & IDEA criteria. Add a statement to make it clear that the DSM diagnosis does not mean that they child will be able to be eligible for any special education services.

3. Practicum and Internship Expectations

- a. Are field-based supervisors of Practicum and Internship students able to provide the support needed to meet university requirements and accreditation requirements?
- b. Is there any additional university level training needed in order to better prepare Practicum students specifically?

Advisory Board Feedback:

Typically this has not been a problem overall, however sometimes due to a lack of counseling as part of our typical role it can be challenging to find practicum students children to counsel individually and in groups and fully support them with this.

A familiarity with the referral and reevaluation process as well as using MTSS to look at things at a systems level (as opposed to just interventions for individual students) would be beneficial. Knowing how to look at class level, grade level, and school level data and compare students' progress would be a great asset going into practicum or at least internship because this is what much of decision-making with MTSS is based on. (Rates improvements, trend lines, and aim lines, etc)

I am appreciative of concern and willingness to help expressed by the SP program leadership and students. I will be anxious to see NASP's guidance in the upcoming weeks and months. I think there will continue to be an opportunity for practicum students and interns in Jackson County. Coming back to school after this period of remote learning will be a great learning experience for students and interns, as I expect our students will have broad needs. Since so many students will likely be affected

and this pandemic has impacted us nationally and internationally, it will be nice to see what school- and state-wide supports will be created and offered. As far as keeping students in NC, we need paid internships, increased SP salary, possibly bonuses for SPs with their NCSP, and a more comprehensive SP role. I really am proud of our state SP board and their advocacy efforts.

Specifically, with respect to the trauma issues that students may present with upon return, I wondered about pairing with the school social workers and counsellors to do a 'critical incident debriefing' with groups of students to determine whether referrals need to happen for DSS or mental health interventions. These could involve an agreed upon set of questions presented to students that are not 'leading' but allow for expression of concerns/fears (2 good things about 'stay-at-home' learning and any bad things and an opportunity to talk privately if requested). All of this depends, of course, on whether we return this year or next. If it is this year, I expect we will have everything on our plates to complete the outstanding evaluations due before the year's end.

4. Program Recruitment

- a. Our applicant numbers have gone up slightly and the quality of applicants has also gone up a little. Any ideas of increasing even more the number of applications received and being a draw for some of the higher quality students once accepted into the program?
- b. We also have improved the diversity of the applicants and candidates in the program. Any thoughts on continuing or even increasing that diversity?

Advisory Board Feedback:

Continue to "advertise" and talk about school psychology as a profession. Despite having done this for more than 20 years, people still confuse my role with "guidance counselor" when I tell them that I'm a school psychologist. There still just doesn't seem to be a whole lot out there about this profession in general.

Highlight good things about the area and unique opportunities in the program and in working with the population in Western North Carolina.

Can get a higher number of quality students if the doctoral program was offered in an online/hybrid/flexible format.

Let these students inform you about how to do this - Talk to students with diverse backgrounds about what attracted them to your program. Ask them about their experience in the program and at, shadowing, practicum and internship sites. What experiences are positive and what can be improved?

Find additional scholarship funding to help local students join the program.

I would add to the issues of keeping trained students here in NC that as long as our pay scale is lower than neighboring states we will see the 'flight' continue. Further, while we continue to operate without budgets well into the school year because of political gamesmanship we will continue to see local LEAs struggle to plan for paid internships which is critical to keeping students here in our state. I would like to offer you as a practicum placement resource for next year if you are willing (trust me I

know this year was not the year for that on top of everything else on your plate with a baby). Have you considered it for next year?

Visiting different Colleges/University & HS Programs

5. Other Issues/Questions?

2019-2020 Program Updates

Current Student Data

1st Years: 7 currently enrolled (9 had initially enrolled but 2 did not start in the Fall)

Avg. GRE	Avg. GPA	Diversity	Other
301	3.60	0 Male 4 Whites 1 African A. 1 A. Indian 1 Hispanic	All 7 should be entering practicum in the Fall Initial research work looks good with 5 deciding to complete a thesis and 2 an applied research project.

2nd Years: 7 currently enrolled (cohort started with 8 but 1 left due to mental health difficulties)

Avg. GRE	Avg. GPA	Diversity	Other
300	3.41	1 Male 6 Whites 1 Asian	All 7 have strong internship placements for Fall 2020 (see below) 1 may be entering internship with an Action Plan Most getting research prospectus/proposal approved prior to internship and some may have completed research defense

2020/2021 Internship Placements

- Henderson County
- Rowan/Salisbury
- Iredell/Statesville
- Alamance/Burlington
- Louden County, VA
- Sarasota, FL
- Thompson School District, CO

3rd Years: 5 currently enrolled (plus one finishing after having to pull out last year due to illness)

Avg. GRE	Avg. GPA	Diversity	Other
297	3.97	1 Male 3 Whites 1 Hispanic	7 originally enrolled 2 left after 1 st semester in program Internship has gone well for this group Most should complete research requirements remotely and graduate in May

2019-2020 Internship Placements

- Gwinnett County, GA (position offered for next year)
- Guilford County, NC (position offered for next year)
- Davie County, NC
- Winston Salem/Forsyth County, NC
- Burke County, NC
- Henderson County, NC (position offered for next year)

4th Years: those unable to graduate after 3 years in the program

- 1 graduated in December after having to complete an additional semester of internship after having to leave her internship early last year due to health issues.
- 1 left internship early last year due to illness and is finishing her internship this year and is still working on her research work.
- 1 is finishing her research project and will graduate in May
- 1 has had significant mental health concerns preventing her from getting her research completed and will require another semester at least.
- 1 was given opportunities to finish her research but has not followed-through and is not communicating.
- This continues to be a top priority concern for the program (see discussion about CIR goals below)

2019-2020 Student Activities

Leadership activities have included:

- NASP Student leader
- Program Student Representatives
- Program Recruitment/Applicant Interviews
- Graduate Student Association Representatives

Professional Development including

- All are encouraged to be NCSPA & NASP members
- All 2nd years attended the NCSPA Fall Conference (2 students did poster presentations)
- All 1st years attended the NASP convention in Baltimore (1 student did a poster presentation)
- Several Psychology Department National Research Presentations

Community Involvement/Service Learning

- Full Spectrum Farms
- The Catamount School

2020 Cohort: goal is 8 to 10 students

26 applications submitted (goal has been to get 30; previous numbers have been 22 to 24)

- 9 out-of-state (fewer than last year)
- 6 WCU undergrads (same as last year but overall stronger scores)
- Diverse backgrounds & experiences

2 were denied an interview (same as last year and both WCU undergrads)

24 were offered interviews (last year only 17 were offered interviews)

- 5 withdrew their application prior to the interviews and 1 never responded to the interview invitation (this was an increase from last year)
- 18 participated in the Online Interview process across 2 days (slight increase)

16 were notified that they had been accepted and 2 were placed on a waitlist

- 5 Graduate Assistantships were available to offer either full or half to top candidates, and 2 out-of-state tuition remissions were available
- 1 was offered a one-time \$1,000 scholarship provided by the Graduate School
- 5 have accepted our offer (1 or 2 may be interested in the PsyD program)
- 6 have declined our offer (more than usual; 4 of these were out-of-state)
- 5 offers still unanswered including 1 on a waitlist

Open House was scheduled for March 27th but had to be canceled

Considering 1 additional applicant who initially applied to the clinical program but was encourage to consider school psychology based on her background; she is interested in the PsyD program.

Current students have continued to do a fantastic job of talking to prospective students, helping with interviews, and helping with the Open House

Accreditation & Program Continuous Improvement Activities

- NASP program approval good through Fall 2025
- CAEP Accreditation self-report is due December 2020 as part of the full college report
 - Actions taken:
 - Practicum & Internship Rubrics were updated and validity assessments completed
 - Practicum & Internship Evaluations updated and validity assessments completed
 - Completer Satisfaction Survey developed and validity assessment completed & data collected
 - Employer Satisfaction Survey developed and validity assessment completed
 - Actions needed:
 - Finish collecting reliability data on the Practicum & Internship Rubrics
 - Collect Employer Satisfaction Survey data
 - Develop a Recruitment Plan
 - Complete Self-Study Reports with data available
 - Develop a Phase-in plan for areas where data is not available or inadequate to include with the Self-Study Report
- 2019/2020 WCU Continuous Improvement Report Goals

- Improved performance on Behavioral Case Studies during Practicum & Internship
- Successful and timely completion of Research Projects
- Improved student skills and confidence in providing counseling and school mental health services

New PsyD Program

Opened this Fall with 5 students in the clinical psychology track and 0 in the school psychology track

Curriculum changes now make it possible for students to earn a Masters degree after first 2 years in the program including completion of Thesis and at that point students are able to apply to the PsyD

- ❖ Currently none of the 1st or 2nd year students are expressing an interest

A few individuals with Masters degrees in other areas have contacted Jon Campbell, PsyD Director to talk about what it would take for them to enter through the school psychology track but they didn't have enough courses matching the courses required during the first 2 years in the school psychology program to enable to enter the PsyD program without taking many additional courses.

2020-2021 Program Faculty Transitions

- ✓ Mickey Randolph will be entering phased retirement and will no longer be teaching any school psychology courses or chairing research projects.
- ✓ Bruce Henderson will be entering full retirement and will no long be teaching any school psychology courses or chairing research project.
- ✓ Lori Unruh is finishing her 13th year as full-time program director and will be assisting Ethan Schilling in his transition into this position.
- ✓ Several new Psychology Department faculty and adjunct faculty have backgrounds that we hope will allow for support to the school psychology program until another school psychology faculty member can be hired.

Other Possible Future Program Activities

- ❖ Develop policies around the use of Action Plans to support student progress
- ❖ Make revisions to Practicum & Internship Requirements to reflect increased MTSS practices
- ❖ Development of a Supervisor Handbook for Practicum & Internship
- ❖ Development of stronger Marketing & Recruitment plans
- ❖ Development of Scholarships using alumni donations
- ❖ Create grants to increase number of GA positions available