

# ΨMPAGS

Maryland Psychological Association for Graduate Students

March 2008

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## MPAGS Newsletter



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Matthew Kirkhart, Ph.D., winner of the first MPAGS Mentoring Award (2007). This year's winner will be announced at the upcoming MPAGS convention on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

## Upcoming Events

### MPAGS Convention

#### Schedule of Events

Join us for the annual  
MPAGS convention!

Where:

Loyola College in Maryland  
Graduate Center

8890 McGraw Road  
Columbia, MD 21045

When: Saturday April 5<sup>th</sup>,  
2008

8:30 to 4:30

8:30-9:00 a.m.	Registration and Refreshments
9:00-10:45 a.m.	Internship ( <a href="#">Click Here</a> for a list of Internship Sites that will be in attendance)
10:45-11:00 a.m.	Break
11:00-11:45 a.m.	Question and Answer Panel with Internship Representatives
11:45-12:00 p.m.	Break
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch/ Announcement of the 2007-08 MPAGS <a href="#">Mentoring Award</a>
1:00-2:30 p.m.	Workshop Session 1
2:30-2:45 p.m.	Break and Refreshments
2:45-4:15 p.m.	Workshop Session 2
4:15-4:30 p.m.	Closing

#### Convention Workshops- Session 1: Session 2:

- Ψ **Mock Internship Interview Seminar**  
Adult Site Representative- Robert Katz, Ph.D.  
Springfield Hospital Center (Sykesville, MD)  
Child Site Representative- Michele Dadson, Ph.D.  
Children's National Medical Center (Washington, D.C.)
- Ψ **Play Therapy**  
Karen Weise, Ph.D.  
Argosy University Washington, D.C.
- Ψ **Immediacy in Psychotherapy**  
Clara Hill, Ph.D.  
University of Maryland College Park

#### Convention Workshops-

- Ψ **Internship Process Seminar**  
Josephine Minardo, Ph.D.  
New York State Psychological  
Association (NYSPA) Board Member
- Ψ **Nonverbal Learning Disorder in Children**  
Kenneth Gelfand, Ph.D.  
Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital
- Ψ **Working with Trauma Survivors**  
Bethany Brand, Ph.D.  
Towson University



## Eye On: Annapolis Watch

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 legislators, professionals, and students came together to advocate for issues affecting the field of psychology. Graduate students in psychology were provided with the unique opportunity to be exposed to the advocacy process, as well as crucial issues affecting our future. Here's what some of the student attendees had to say:

It was one of the greatest experiences I had. I got to be with people that shared my professional goals and ethics. I enjoyed being with and speaking with the Doctors because they were excellent role models!

*-Karen Gaskins, Walden University*

As a perspective member of MPA, I was happy to have the opportunity to attend the conference and meet with not only current members of MPA, but also with the state legislation. Having the chance to sit in on one of the delegation meetings was also interesting. I got to see what it will be like in a few years when I will have to advocate for improvements in the mental health care system and those in need. I look forward to events to come with MPA.

*Tristie Tappin, MA, Argosy University*

When I saw the announcement about Annapolis Watch, I was immediately excited about the opportunity to lobby for our field. However, I didn't think that my presence would be all that helpful. I decided to attend so I could watch and learn. After hearing the bills we would be supporting, I was energized because I knew that the MPA's presence was needed in the legislature. I was then asked to lobby that morning! As the graduate students approached the table in front of the legislators, they clapped for us and afterwards told us how happy they were to see graduate students. It was then that I realized our presence was even more important than our words!

The Annapolis Watch was an awesome opportunity to network with psychologists in the field. I was overwhelmed by the friendly response from the psychologists who were happy to see graduate students involved. A few gave me their cards, some invited me to serve on their committees, and others let me know of employment opportunities coming up in my hometown. The graduate students were certainly welcomed at this event!

*-Melinda Capaldi, 1<sup>st</sup> Year Psy.D. Student, Loyola College in Maryland*

## Social Responsibility: A Graduate Student's Perspective

By Linda Jones Herbert, MA, MPAGS Advocacy Chair

Inherent in most psychologists is the desire to positively affect the lives of the individuals with whom they work. The desire to affect the lives around us may take many forms-- clinical psychologists have a direct impact on the lives of their therapy clients, research psychologists aim to understand the individuals they study and apply their insights to helping others, and academic psychologists seek to impart knowledge and encourage students to continue their work-- but ultimately, improving the lives of others is the essence of the occupation we have chosen.

In my graduate program at UMBC, the Human Services Psychology program, each graduate student studies a core knowledge base (the biological bases of behavior, human development, personality, and social and community psychology) and receives additional training in a chosen specialization (clinical, behavioral medicine, and/or community). The structure of the program is designed to encourage students to think about problems comprehensively and to develop solutions that integrate multiple angles and disciplines. This holistic approach to graduate training is becoming the norm. Indeed, APA-accreditation of psychology graduate programs requires that graduate students receive training in a broad range of areas including the biological and social aspects of behavior, individual differences in behavior, and professional standards and ethics (APA, 2008). APA mandates that programs include knowledge and experience concerning the role of cultural/individual diversity in psychological phenomena. Thus, the education and training required to earn a graduate degree in psychology uniquely qualifies us to serve as social advocates for the individuals with whom we work. As the axiom says, knowledge is power-- and with power comes responsibility.

So what, then, is social responsibility? It is voluntarily using our skills and knowledge to improve society. It requires us to be proactive rather than reactive in addressing social problems, and to respect and promote human rights. Our ethics codes includes respect for diversity and promotion of human welfare. This does not preclude us from further embracing our potential as social activists in a variety of ways.

My current enthusiasm about social activism developed gradually. My initial interest in psychology stemmed from a desire to work with children and I rarely thought about the possibilities beyond individual work. Over time, I learned more about the impact of family, school, and neighborhood systems on children's mental health. I gained experience navigating these systems and insight into the potential impact I could have on social policies pertaining to healthcare and educational systems that directly affect children. While I enjoyed working individually with clients, I knew that I wanted to be involved more broadly.

So how can psychologists be socially active? A good place to start is to educate oneself regarding current public policies that affect our clients. Are our clients struggling with insurance companies to pay for therapy? Do the populations we work with receive appropriate attention from federal and state legislators? Are our minority clients treated fairly or are they discriminated against? Another important step is to educate ourselves about political candidates' platforms on topics such as health care reform, education, and anti-discrimination laws, and then exercising our influence by voting and sharing our informed opinions with legislators. Other ways to get involved include participating in events such as MPA's annual Annapolis Watch, an event designed to facilitate communication between psychologists and legislators, and MPAGS's upcoming National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) walk, an opportunity to raise money for a non-profit, grassroots organization whose mission is to improve the lives of individuals with mental illness.

Many of our practice niches include natural opportunities to serve as advocates for specific populations. For example, in my practicum and research experiences with children and families, I have worked with children with epilepsy, autism, food allergy, obesity, ADHD, and numerous other medical and psychological conditions. Many of these children and their families are supported by non-profit organizations comprised of parents and legal experts whose goals include more comprehensive services for children with a particular diagnosis, such as ADHD or autism. These organizations welcome psychologists who are willing to serve as consultants and co-advocates for children and families. They recognize the contributions psychologists, with their unique knowledge and training, can make towards meeting their goals.

These examples are far from exhaustive. I encourage graduate students and psychologists alike, to participate in some form of social activism. We can serve as facilitators between the clients who turn to us for assistance and the legislators who make policies that affect their lives. We can give a voice to those individuals and organizations that need professional guidance. As psychologists, we are taught to think analytically and to integrate knowledge from multiple sources. Our ethics codes hold us to high standards. We have chosen an occupation dedicated to understanding and improving the lives of others. We have the knowledge and skills to serve as social activists; all we need is the drive.

### References

American Psychological Association (2008). *Guides and Principles for Accreditation of Programs in Professional Psychology*. Washington, DC: Author.

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## More than Just School: The Life of a Graduate Student

by Crystal A. Kannankeril, M.S., MPAGS Diversity Chair

The life of a psychology graduate student has become more than just attending classes. Although the majority of our time is still dedicated to academics such as class work, externships, and the ever-present dissertation, graduate students are becoming more diverse in their extracurricular activities and pursuits. From my experience, there are three main areas with which current graduate students might become involved beyond the graduate school curriculum.

Many graduate students have jobs on top of schoolwork because they are often supporting themselves - and sometimes their families - financially. Although certain jobs may be unrelated to psychology, graduate students tend to opt for jobs linked to the psychological field. A number of students have become mental health workers at local hospitals, research assistants for professors, and psychology associates involved with psychotherapy or psychological testing. Even jobs obtained through the graduate school itself are often relevant to psychology, such as becoming a teaching assistant or working at the career or disability support services center. Thus, graduate students appear to be multi-tasking in meeting their financial needs and obtaining more experience in the field.

In addition to working, graduate students are becoming more involved with professional organizations. In fact, the graduate student demographic represents a significant portion of membership in psychological associations. Graduate students are being elected as student representatives and voting members of executive board committees, authoring articles for professional publications, and advocating for the future of psychology at events such as Annapolis Watch. Graduate student branches of psychological associations are also becoming more prominent, with increased membership and involvement allowing for the enhancement of professional activities for students. For example, the Maryland Psychological Association for Graduate Students

(MPAGS), a student-run organization, hosts an annual convention that caters to graduate students' interests in internship sites as well as interactive lectures about diverse topics in psychology.

Graduate students also volunteer for various causes outside of professional organizations. Not only is volunteering a virtuous way to give back to the community, but it is also an aspirational component of the ethical principle of fidelity and responsibility, which aims to guide the work of psychologists (APA, 2002). As such, graduate students are volunteering their time and services to a myriad of areas relevant to psychology, such as psychiatric hospitals and crisis hotlines.

As a result of these various activities, maintaining balance has become an integral part of graduate students' lives. Recently, a dialogue about self-care surfaced on the MPAGS e-mail listserv on which several students discussed how they were able to balance all of their academic and extracurricular pursuits as well as maintain their social relationships and general well-being. Many students agreed that they prioritize goals and aim to dedicate free hours to activities that are not only beneficial to the future of psychology, but also enjoyable for themselves. Although self-care may unintentionally appear at the end of students' lists, graduate students are becoming more aware of their priorities and striving to achieve their goals without sacrificing self-care. With all of these activities in mind, it seems the title of "student" does not truly encompass all that the modern-day graduate student has become.

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# Join Us!

## Become an MPAGS Member

If you are a student member of MPA, then you are a member of MPAGS!!

If you are not, then joining MPAGS is easy, and costs \$25 - a one-time only fee! With yearly e-mail renewal the membership brings benefits lasting your entire graduate student career, which for doctoral students can include the post-doc supervision year.

### Benefits:

- Discounts to MPA/MPAGS events including the annual MPAGS Convention & Internship Fair
- Publication opportunities
- Leadership role opportunities
- Networking with other professionals
- Involvement in legislative initiatives
- Membership on the MPAGS and MPA listserv

To Learn More Visit:  
<http://www.marylandpsychology.org/MPAGS.htm>

To join, complete an online application at:  
[www.marylandpsychology.org/join](http://www.marylandpsychology.org/join)

For more information contact our Membership Chair, Katie Kane at [KaneKatie@gmail.com](mailto:KaneKatie@gmail.com)

[Click Here](#) to be directed to the MPAGS Webpage.