



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELING

The Communicator | Spring/Summer 2018

coe.unomaha.edu/coun

Winner of the 2018 Chi Sigma Iota Outstanding Chapter Newsletter of the Year!



A Message from the Chair

Hello from the Counseling Department-

While this issue of **(the award winning!)** *Communicator* is a bit delayed, I'm confident you will find it well worth the wait. But first, let us all take a moment and appreciate the arrival of warm weather(!)

Ok, for beginners, the spring semester was no doubt a busy one for you, and the department was no different. First, congrats to our long list of **Fall '17 and Spring '18 graduates** across our CMHC, School, and Student Affairs! We wish you all the best as you begin your careers as professional counselors and student affairs professionals (and some post-grads!) (p. 9). And take a look at our incoming students in the group photo on p. 8. Next, in our **CSI Corner** you'll see the wide variety of recent events and upcoming projects that are the direct result of the hard work of our Upsilon Nu Omicron officers. Don't forget to review (and attend!) the numerous social and educational/professional events offered through Chi Sigma Iota- and various community/school settings-there are always educational, advocacy and leadership opportunities out there! Check out all the options in this issue.



Several important faculty announcements are included in this issue (pp. 2-3), including the promotion of **Dr. Bjornsen-Ramig (p. 3)** to tenured associated professor and the hiring of **Elizabeth Tolliver** as our new school counseling assistant professor (**p. 2**). More recently,

Dr. Blount (p. 2) announced her transition to an instructor line where she will teach online courses as a result of a recent family move. Further, **Mr. Richards (p. 2)** will be transitioning from an instructor position to part-time beginning this summer.

Also, be sure to take a few moments to read our **"In the Know"** section where we explored the experiences of UNO Counseling students who are **first generation college students** (pp. 4-5). There are many interesting insights about your fellow counseling students college experiences! Time to get reading—have a great summer!

Dr. Kissinger

Chair, UNO Counseling Dept.

May is Mental Health Month



afsp.org



May is Mental Health Month!

According to National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), **1 in 6 adults** are impacted by mental health issues. In 2016, this was roughly **44.7 million** people. The month of May is recognized as Mental Health Month and many mental health organizations are especially dedicated to advocating and bringing awareness to mental health during this time. The American

Foundation for Suicide Prevention is challenging citizens and mental health practitioners to have **#RealConvo's** with people about mental health. Even though mental health is present and common here in the US, it is still stigmatized and not discussed openly. We challenge you to engage in a **#RealConvo** about mental health this month!



Urban Dictionary:

Faculty **411**

411: 1. slang for 'the info', 2. asking for the low-down on something or someone

Dr. Ashley Blount

Due to her family's move to Colorado, Dr. Blount will transition to an instructor position For the 2018-2019 academic year and

will teach online courses. Dr. Blount has been an outstanding faculty member and we're very sad to see her leave. However, we're fortunate that she'll be staying with us next year as she and her family (including new baby girl Zuri!) adjust to life in Colorado.



Mr. Rick Richards

Mr. Richards has been with us since 2007, the last 5 years in an instructor role. Mr. Richards has been instrumental in the school counseling program's growth, accreditation, and revisions over the last few years in particular. The department is indebted to Mr. Richards for his service and dedication and are pleased that he will remain with us as an adjunct instructor beginning Fall 2018.



and INTRODUCING... the newest Faculty member of the UNO Counseling Department

Elizabeth Tolliver



The UNO Counseling Department is excited to welcome the soon to be Dr. Elizabeth Tolliver as our newest school counseling faculty beginning Fall 2018. She currently resides in Aurora, CO. and is teaching and completing her PhD in Counselor Education and Supervision at the University of Northern Colorado. She holds a masters in school counseling from West Virginia University and a bachelors in Human Services from Virginia Tech University. Her research interests include play therapy, parental incarceration, intimate partner violence, and emotional competence. Outside of work, she enjoys running, and spending quality time family and friends.

Faculty Announcements

Congratulations Dr. Abby Bjornsen-Ramig, our newest Tenured Professor!



Educational & Professional History

I received my BS in Psychology from the University of Nebraska, Kearney, and my MA in Counseling from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. I completed my doctoral program in Counseling Psychology at the University of Kansas. My predoctoral internship was through the Counseling Center at the University of San Diego, and my postdoctoral fellowship was through Counseling and Psychological Services at the University of California, Berkeley. I began my full-time faculty position at UNO in 2012, and recently became tenured as an associate professor earlier this spring. I also do a bit of contract assessment on the side (currently for ADHD and learning disabilities, and previously for veteran benefits evaluations), and I provide supervision for a few of our provisionally-licensed alums.

What is your favorite aspect of the UNO counseling department?

As cliché as it may sound, the students are definitely my favorite part - it's such a blast to teach/supervise/advise graduate students, as most of them genuinely want to be here, and contribute to such a fun learning environment. I love keeping up with our alums after they graduate, and seeing all of the great things they're out there doing in the world! I'm also proud of all of the changes we've made to the department in recent years, including updates in our *Community Counseling Clinic*, which I've had the opportunity to supervise for the past three years. I'm proud to share a role in our students providing such meaningful and high quality services to folks in the community...the work you do really does matter!

What was the most challenging part of obtaining tenure?

I'd say the toughest part of the pre-tenure process (which is six years in length) was balance. Most students don't realize all of the additional roles/responsibilities that tenure-track faculty have outside of "just teaching" - we're doing a lot of research, grant writing, and serving on a host of committees in the department, college, and university, as well as in the community and the profession. For me, finding chunks of time to work on my research was the most difficult (especially since it's such a big part of the tenure process). Fun things to look forward to if any of you are considering a career in academia!

What is your favorite thing to do in Omaha?

I love taking my dog Phyllis on walks in various places around town, and when I lived closer to campus, I enjoyed running in the Happy Hollow area (although I never managed to run in-to Warren Buffet). I also like to unwind with a good happy hour (Blue Sushi is probably my fave), and I do have an affinity for shopping (my recent obsession is the Le Creuset store at the outlets). I've also gotten into small home improvement tasks, such as painting accent walls and hanging fun light fixtures.

What is better- Parks and Rec or The Office?

Man, that's a toughie! I'm chagrined to admit that I didn't watch either of these shows until my husband got me hooked on them (he's obsessed with both). I'm deep into the throes of P&R as we speak, so I'm going to have to go with that one. I'm definitely more of a Leslie Knope type, but Ron Swanson is everything I truly aspire to be! If we're talking reality TV, I'd strongly recommend *Big Brother* (it's on 3x/week in the summer, so it's a bit of a commitment, but well worth it!) My two cents: just because you're in graduate school doesn't mean you can't watch TV - always keep your finger on the pulse of society!

Do you have any advice for incoming or future counseling students?

I'd recommend being visible. We want to get to know you, so it helps if you speak up in class every once in awhile, and it doesn't hurt to stay in touch with your advisor to ensure that you're doing what you need to be doing. There are definitely opportunities to become involved (e.g., Chi Sigma, various outreach opportunities, assisting with research, etc.), and I really do think that students get out of this program what they put into it. Also keep in mind that if you ever need to request letters of recommendation from faculty, we can write you a much stronger letter if we've had the opportunity to get to know you. Other than that, just be yourself...it's the only way you'll find your fit in this field!



IN THE KNOW...

Professional counselors strive to learn more about ourselves and others in order to optimize our success in our professional and personal lives. While we know UNO Counseling Students hail from Nebraska and across the globe, how aware are we, really, of the experiences of those sitting with us in class? “In the Know” is designed to highlight the experiences by exploring topics and issues that highlight the diversity of experiences of students in our department.

First-Generation College Students

Although you may not pay close attention to it, several UNO counseling students are first-generation students. A first-generation college student is defined as a student whose parent(s)/legal guardian(s) have not completed a bachelor's degree. In short, they're the first person in their immediate family to attend a four-year college/university to attain a bachelor's degree—much less a graduate degree. This got us to wondering about how the experience of being a first-generation student has influenced their graduate studies and/or their interest in a career in being a professional counselor and/or student affairs professional.

To that end, we created and circulated a short survey asking UNO Counseling students to better understand the life experiences of our UNO first-generation counseling students —and how these experiences are integral/integrated into their current graduate experience. The results of this intra-department survey follow in this installment of “**In The Know...**”

By the Numbers...:

⇒ **190 students in the UNO Counseling program were surveyed via the department's listserv.**

The counseling program is divided up into the Clinical Mental Health Counseling, School Counseling, and Student Affairs concentrations. Currently, 127 of those students are studying Clinical Mental Health, 48 are studying School Counseling, and 15 are studying Student Affairs.

Survey Respondents:

⇒ **30 Counseling students completed the voluntary survey**

⇒ **19 Clinical Mental Health; 7 School Counseling; 4 Student Affairs**

⇒ **29/30 (96.7%) of respondents are first-generation students**

⇒ **25/30 (83.3%) of respondents are female**

⇒ **20/30 (66.7%) of respondents self-identified as European American/White; 7/30 (23.3%) as Latino (a) or Hispanic; 2/30 (6.7%) as African American or black; and 1/30 (3.3%) as Multiple Races or Ethnicities.**

⇒ **18/30 (64.3%) of respondents reported personal and professional goals motivated them to pursue their education**

⇒ **6/30 (21.4%) of respondents reported family as a key motivation for pursuing their education.**

Social support may be extra important to first-generation students because they may face greater barriers to choosing college. Family support can play an important role in the transition to college and graduate school especially, as they can be advocates in the college planning process by helping with applications, talking through career choices, supporting financially, and serving as emotional resources. Further, by expressing joy and pride at the important accomplishment of being the first in the family to go to college, first-generation families can give students the emotional support needed to step into college with more confidence, according to Miller, 2007. First-generation counseling students reported a variety of motivation and support, from family and friends to professors and mentors. [For example, one student stated,](#)



“They are proud of where I am and believe in my dreams. They are excited on how I will use my higher education to make a difference on my community.” Miguel Estevez

CMH student Miguel Estevez (left) with his mother, father, and brother.

CMH student Miguel Estevez (left) with his friend Neisha after his graduation.



However, not all families are familiar with, or see the value of, the extensive training and educational requirements of graduate school. For example, one student stated:

“I often hear, “When is enough enough?” My parents don’t see the value of a graduate degree because I am already in a professional position making more money than they ever have. I do not often feel like I can vent to them and expect them to emphasize because my experiences in grad school are so foreign to them.”

Unsurprisingly, differences in support system could be a challenge for first-generation students in many different ways. As noted, it may be stressful having to justify why you would need “another” college degree to get a job that parents or other significant others view as unnecessary or excessive. In other cases, faculty have reported first generation students eluding (or clearly stating) that their family members were concerned they would “look down” on them for not having a college degree (or in some cases HS diplomas). Thus, it is important to remember that UNO counseling students, for generations past and future, will wrestle will encounter this challenge. Now ask yourself, if you are not a first generation student, have you ever had to justify why you needed a graduate degree? If so, what was the basis for your argument supporting your degree? And what was the reason you were asked to justify your studies? Are they similar or different than a first generation student and, if so, how?

Overall, it is clear that our first gen students experience a range of understanding and support as they work toward their counseling degree. What can’t be denied, however, is the steady dedication and vision they show as they encounter the range of challenges associated with completing the extensive requirements of a graduate degree in counseling. In doing so, they will shortly (and for years to come) become essential stakeholders in the wellbeing and success of future generations of Nebraskans and their families.

On behalf of the UNO Counseling Department, we wish to thank all our student respondents for their feedback, insights, and encouragement for other students (first gen or otherwise).

Some responses included:

“I would tell them not to hesitate and go for it! It is one of the most awakening and satisfying experiences in life.” –Jeffrey Southall II

We hope this installment of **“In the Know”** has provided some new insights about first-generation students and different schooling experiences. While no two stories are alike, one thing is for certain: UNO counseling students are committed students, no matter their educational and past experiences. It is this commitment that makes our students and graduates respected members of the counseling profession across specialization areas.



CMH student Jeffrey Southall II with his parents at his undergraduate graduation.

Miller, R. (2007). The association of family history knowledge and cultural change with persistence among undergraduate low-income, first-generation college students. *Research & Teaching in Developmental Education*, 24(1), 29-45.

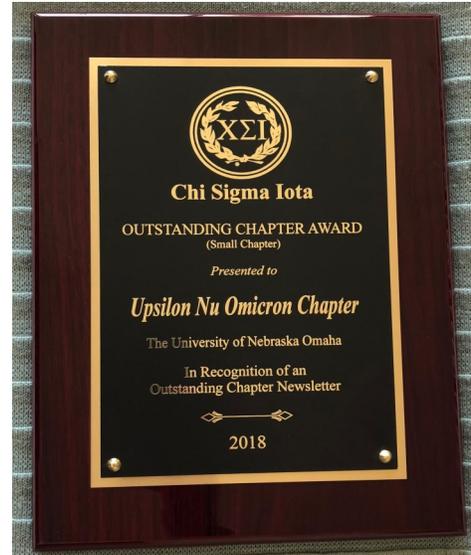
Chi Sig Corner



Chapter: Upsilon Nu Omicron

We won!!!

Our UNO chapter, Upsilon Nu Omicron, won the 2018 Outstanding Chapter Newsletter Award! The award was presented to Dr. Kissinger at the 2018 Annual ACA Conference on April 28th in Atlanta, Georgia.



Upcoming Events

Yoga Fundraiser

Come celebrate wellness & the end of a semester!

WHAT: One hour group yoga class.

WHEN: Saturday, April 28 at 1:00 PM

WHERE: On campus outside of Roskens Hall (the big grassy area)

Special Note: You are welcome to bring a yoga mat or towel. However, we found last year that it was easier to just do it on the grass. Water will be provided. *This event is freewill donation. Funds will be used sponsor a family in a developing country through Heifer International.*



Andi Palladino will be the instructor for this event. She is an experienced Yoga instructor in both Omaha and Iowa.

Pet-A-Pup Fundraiser

Fall 2018

Finals Week got you Stressed?

Upsilon Nu Omicron is planning an event for next semester aiming at bringing therapy & service dogs to campus during finals week.

If you're interested in helping plan this event, please contact Lindsay Vik (lvik@unomaha.edu) or Carli Palladino (carli.palladino@gmail.com) to find out more!



Upsilon Nu Omicron x Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska Symposium On Mental Health in Academic Settings

Upsilon Nu Omicron partnered with Behavioral Health Education Center of Nebraska (BHECN) this semester to put on an expert panel discussing the various mental health, social work, psychology, and school counseling professionals found in schools. Our panelists discussed their role in schools, their past experiences, as well as current trends and legislation related to mental health and behavioral health in schools. Below is a excerpt from BHECN's monthly newsletter shared statewide.



BHECN co-sponsored UNO's Symposium on Counseling, Mental Health & Behavioral Health Careers in P-12 Schools in March. Expert panelists included (left to right) Megan Pendley, LICSW, Tim Hron, LIMHP, Ann Luther, Ed.D., and Brian McKeivitt, Ph.D., NSCP.



Hosted by the UNO Counseling Department and Upsilon Nu Omicron, the event was coordinated with the help of UNO master of counseling students (left to right) Carli Palladino, Meaghan Barr, Lindsay Vik, Jared Langenmeier

BHECN | BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
EDUCATION CENTER
OF NEBRASKA



Spring CSI Webinars

Register at: http://www.csi-net.org/?Webinars_Scheduled

Integrating Mindfulness into Counseling: Research and Practical Applications

- Dr. Cheryl Fulton
- Wednesday, February 21st, 2018—2-3 pm EST

Phenomenology and Grounded Theory: Two Qualitative Approaches to Research

- Dr. Donna M. Gibson
- Wednesday, March 14th, 2018—2-3 pm EDT

Adolescent Sexting: Legal and Ethical Issues for Professional Counselors

- Drs. Vaughn S. Millner & G. Virginia Pike, JD
- Wednesday, March 21st, 2018—1:30-2:30 pm EDT

Implementation of Effective DBT Strategies in Your Clinical Work with Adolescent Females

- Dr. Caroline Perjessy
- Wednesday, April 4th, 2018—2-3 pm EDT

Solution Focused Brief Counseling with Children and Adolescents: Tips and Strategies

- Dr. Natalie F. Spencer
- Thursday, April 12th, 2018—2-3 pm EDT

Supervising Counselors on the Forefront of an Epidemic

- Dr. Barbara A. Mahaffey, Dr. Joan Lawrence, Candice Crawford, & Dr. Tanisha Sapp
- Wednesday, April 18th, 2018—12-1 pm EDT

Advocacy Corner

- **What is advocacy?** - Counselors need to get out of their offices and connect directly with people in their own environments! There are many opportunities to get involved in Omaha and beyond.
- **What can you do?** - (1) find a problem and/or population that you are passionate about, (2) become informed on the issues, (3) share what you know & raise awareness! (4) by presenting at conferences, filling a need that isn't being met, doing workshops with involved populations, and (5) get out of your comfort zone!
- **In the words of ACA President Thelma Duffey**, "I think counseling outreach provides ... an opportunity for counselors to contribute to their communities by offering their areas of knowledge and expertise—at times to people who feel, and sometimes are, unsupported."

Promoting Mental Health & Counseling

UNO Clinical Mental Health students (from left to right)

Lindsay Vik, Julia

Downey & Gina

Kadima completed

an outreach opportunity through

Metropolitan

Community College

to promote counseling & the UNO Community Counseling Clinic.



Advocacy Opportunities to Know About

60 Minutes of Service

- Come learn all about a local nonprofit from organization's staff members and complete a fun and meaningful service project.
- First Wednesday of the month, 12-1pm, UNO Weitz CEC building
- More info at <https://www.unomaha.edu/community-engagement-center/news/2017/01/service.php>.

The Office for Civil and Social Responsibility

- leadership, teamwork, effective communication, and critical thinking skills?
- social, emotional, and intercultural competencies?
- civic identity: a sense of purpose and leadership within the community?
- More info at <https://www.unomaha.edu/student-life/civic-and-social-responsibility/index.php>.

Stigma free

Join NAMI, the National Alliance on Mental Illness, in its journey to break down the stigma around mental illnesses. Take the pledge to end the stigma and promote hope for those with mental illness. Help change "Stigma Free ME" to "Stigma Free WE" at: <https://www.nami.org/>



Welcome to the Program!



Please welcome the Fall 2018 Counseling Students!

Jordan, Aruna, James, Samantha, Samantha, Christopher, Meaghan, Nicholas, Jonathan, Elizabeth, Kelly, Michael, Coral, Nazaneen, Mikaela, Madeline, Ronicka, Jennifer, Susan, Ameen, Zhomontee, Amber, Andrew, Maria, Bibi, Megan, Jada, Sophia, Christina, Kaelynn, Kathryn, Jennifer, Kaitlyn, Melissa, Jeffrey, Katherine, Jacob, Kristin, Kristal, Susan, and Yousuf!

Funding for Research & Travel

Potential funding for students interested in attending a professional conference can seek support and can make travel requests in two locations. Students who will be presenting their research/projects are more likely to receive funding, than those who are only attending a conference. These requests should be made well in advance of the conference.

1. A proposal with a detailed budget (summary of presentation, conference name, registration fees, airfare, etc..) should be submitted directly to the Dean of the COE.
2. Information on other sources such as the University Committee on Research & Creative Activity (GRACA) and funding agencies exterior to the University can be obtained from the Office of Research and Creative Activity (ORCA).

*Please note all proposals should be submitted electronically as a document in PDF to: unosponpro@unomaha.edu.

Congrats to our Graduates!



December 2017 Graduates

Alexandrea Ashley (Bates), Alexa Badura, Amber Dertman, Nathan Hayward, Sepehr Khalili-Tari, Renee Pigsley, Thomas Seguin, and Michael Tosh!

Spring 2018 Graduates

Meaghan Barr, Alliea Bice, Jennifer Bohle, Ali Bohlke, Lakresha Clark, Allison Derby, Elizabeth Ferzely, Cari Hagemoser, Kaitlyn Harper, Lalia Hart, Danielle Herzog, Thomas Jones, Allison Kaipust, Gabrielle Kates, Sydney Keller, Heather Klein-Gladney, Erika Mardock, Jessica Mukherjee, Colleen Pribyl, Beau Sedlacek, Michele Senkbile, Marissa Starman, Daquane Triplett, Gerrit Vansteenbergen, Paige Vorderstrasse, Robert Wachal, Megan Windhorst, Veronica Wolf, Caroline Yung, Janelle Zach, and Giovanna Zermeno!

UNO Community Counseling Clinic update

Clinic hours: Monday-Thursday, 2-7 pm

The UNO Community Counseling Clinic continues to provide effective, low-cost counseling services to individuals and couples in the Omaha metro community. In fact, *our clinic provided over 800 hours of direct counseling services to clients in the last academic year alone*. Our success is due to the hard work of faculty, staff, and especially the practicum students who are providing the services-well done all!!

As we continue to build on our success and work to provide low cost mental health services to citizens in Omaha, we continue to appreciate referrals to this service and have cards and brochures available for local community distribution if you would like to help. As a reminder, current rates are \$10 for individual counseling and \$20 for couples.

For more information, please visit our website at: <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-education/counseling/community-counseling-clinic/index.php>

Sincerely,

Dr. Daniel B. Kissinger, Clinic Director

Laurelin Sterns, PLMHP Clinic Coordinator

Dr. Abby Bjornsen-Ramig, Practicum Instructor

dkissinger@unomaha.edu

lsterns@unomaha.edu

abjornsen@unomaha.edu

Department of Counseling | 402-554-2727 |

www.unomaha.edu/college-of-education/counseling/

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