Summertime at the College of Education

The beginning stages of any graduate program can be a nerve-wracking experience for anyone who is not used to the demands of graduate work. There is quite a bit of fear surrounding the unknown, the daunting expectations of labs as well as the daily strive to achieve personal growth. From all of us at Chi Sigma Iota, we extend a warm welcome to all the first year students of the 2014 counseling cohort.

~Josh Plunkett
~ Meet you 2014-2015 CSI Officers ~

Sarah Anderson is a Master of Arts candidate in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. She serves as the President of Chi Sigma Iota for the 2014-2015 school year. Sarah did her practicum at Empowerment Therapy Center and will continue her internship there as well. At Empowerment Therapy Center, Sarah currently works with Domestic Violence, Nurturing Parenting and Substance Abuse. Sarah plans to graduate with her CACII (certified addictions counselor) and work with addictions and substance abuse.

Vicky Thomas is the vice president of CSI and is currently a second year at UCCS on the Clinical Mental Health tract with an emphasis on Addictions. She has been working as a Child Protection Family Counselor for four years. During this time, she has primarily worked with families struggling with addiction and is trained in Motivational Interviewing, Solution-Focused Brief Therapy, and Animal Assisted Therapy. The services she provides to families at Savio House includes, parenting classes, family therapy, individual therapy, kids group therapy, and parent-child bonding. She has also worked with adolescents in a group home here in town called The Dale House Project. She was able to help residents focus on life skills, education and emancipation. This is also where she met her husband Jeff. They will be celebrating five years of marriage this August. Vicky also has a dog named Gordon who enjoys going to Bear Creek Dog Park. Call her up if you would like to join!
Ariel Adams is on the Clinical Mental Health track in the Counseling and Human Services program here at UCCS. She serves as the Membership and Event Planning Chair for Chi Sigma Iota. She has experience working at a private practice for counseling and will start interning at the Eating Disorder Center of Colorado Springs, as well as Empowerment Therapy Center in the Fall. She looks forward to welcoming new members into the counseling program and planning events for Chi Sigma Iota this academic year!

Elizabeth Burgin is a Master of Arts candidate in the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. Elizabeth serves as the Secretary of Chi Sigma Iota and works in the Student Resource Office as a Graduate Assistant Liaison for the UCCS College of Education. Employed by Kids Resource Network, Elizabeth works in the DHS, foster care, and adoptive care systems, focusing in the areas of trauma and domestic violence recovery with families. In addition to the training she has received at UCCS, Elizabeth's scope of experience includes Nurturing Parenting, play therapy, parent-child interactional, life skills and family preservation interventions, as well as individual, group, and family therapy.
Dr. Bita Rivas has been in the field of mental health since 2007. She worked in a residential treatment center with adolescent girls. She has experience with different populations in RTC working in several units. Other work in the field included facilitating groups for court ordered offenders specializing in adolescents. She has done Pro-Bono work at a counseling center in Denver working with underserved populations. She started a private practice in 2010 and continues private practice work. Dr. Rivas earned her Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Biology from Metropolitan State University of Denver.

She earned both her Master of Arts (M.A.) in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Doctor of Education (Ed.D) in Counselor Education and Supervision from Argosy University Denver. She is licensed in the state of Colorado as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC) and holds her National Certified Counselor (NCC) certification through the National Board of Certified Counselors (NBCC). She has a wide range of specialties to include: supervision, teaching, individual, and group counseling. She sees adolescents, adults, individuals, and couples with an interest in grief and loss, life transitions, complicated grief, trauma, communication, and anxiety & stress.

Dr. Rivas has been teaching since 2010. She has taught at the Community College of Aurora teaching undergraduate psychology and at Argosy University teaching masters level counseling classes. Dr. Rivas has been at UCCS since the summer of 2013 and is now serving as the Chapter Faculty Advisor for our CSI chapter, Chi Upsilon Sigma. Dr. Rivas is involved in several professional organizations. She currently serves as a mentor the American Counseling Association. In addition, she is currently working with RMACES on a new project, the interstate license agreement committee is working toward unifying license portability in the Rocky Mountain Region. It is an exciting time to work within professional organizations to better serve the counseling community.
~ Valerie Boughton: Second Year Mental Health Counseling ~

What made you wish to pursue the counseling field?
Valerie: I am very passionate about research, specifically psychological research surrounding traumatic brain injuries. Psychotherapeutically speaking, however, I see how important human connection and family and environmental support is for the individual. I also believe that taking on a systemic perspective because when an individual has a substance abuse issue, the whole family has to adjust and recover as a unit.

You’re doing your internship at the VA. What sort of things are you doing there?
Valerie: I am doing substance abuse treatment at the VA. We do a wide range of with respect to that area — DUI Therapy/education, intensive outpatient, partial hospitalization and outpatient treatment as needed. We are also implementing many non-pharmaceutical evidence based and somatic therapies such as CBT-I, ACT, Alpha-Stim, yoga and meditation, and a variety of group therapies.

So what made you wish to pursue the VA specifically?
Valerie: The issues at the VA hit home for me. I have had a handful of family members whom have had severe substance abuse concerns. These individuals have suffered trauma, PTSD, and struggled with drug and alcohol addiction as a way to cope with psychological and physical pain. My uncle’s struggles motivated me to pursue substance abuse treatment in the VA. After 22 years in the Army, and receiving a Purple Heart, he fell deep into depression, followed by addiction. In this stage of his military career, he may have also contributed to the ubiquitous prescription drug problem in the context of military personnel as a prescriber.

I personally feel that prescriptions should be given only in conjunction with psychotherapy and other eclectic therapies. I also recognize the high suicide rate in the military, and I feel that I can be effective and proactive with prevention and intervention as a counselor. I presented a poster at the CSI symposium on alternative treatments for Service members and Veterans, and continue to be very passionate about serving our military members and Veterans in the context of behavioral health. In short, I have noticed that there is such a need for addiction counseling, non-pharmaceutical therapies, and suicide prevention and intervention and with our Service members and Veterans.

You received the McNair scholarship. Do you mind telling us about that?
Valerie: As an undergraduate, I participated in the McNair Scholars Program. This program promotes graduate education for underrepresented demographics in the empirical disciplines such as math, science, engineering and research-based fields. Each year, nine undergraduates in the country are selected as McNair Scholars, and I was fortunate enough to be one of those nine. As a McNair Scholar, I was eligible to apply for the McNair Scholarship this year, and was recently awarded a significant scholarship. The McNair Scholars Program has benefitted me in countless ways, and I am evermore grateful for this scholarship.

Valerie is continuing her internship with the VA until graduation and continues to be a significant figure in the mental health community. All the best Valerie!
Will Walls is a 2014 graduate of the Clinical Mental Health Counseling program. We had a chance to sit and talk with him to see what opportunities his recent graduation has created for him.

**What have you been up to since your recent graduation?**
**Will:** I recently got a job at Savio House working with families with a member who is going through drug court. While working closely with DHS, I deal quite a bit with families who have drug-related issues. I am also at the Thede Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders where I currently work with clients with autism spectrum diagnoses. I have also received a position with Colorado Christian University as an adjunct faculty member where I will be teaching. Needless to say I have been busy.

**So what made you want to pursue the counseling program?**
**Will:** Basically I noticed that it is the common thread in all the careers I have pursued in the past. Moreover, I had a life changing experience as a client in the past, and then found out how helpful it was as a newlywed as well. I believe in the field of counseling.

**What is the most significant thing you have learned during your two year stint in the counseling program?**
**Will:** Never underestimate the value of basic counseling skills like reflecting content and emotion. Being present, attentive listening and the therapeutic relationship are always important.

**Do you have any advice for the first year students?**
**Will:** Do the things you are afraid of because you can either leave this program being intensely grateful for the risks you took, or you can leave this program being regretful that you did not and not personally grow and get the most out of it you could have.
Leann Morgan, Ph.D. Assistant Professor

On July 8, 2014, Josh Plunkett conducted this interview with Dr. Leann Morgan

What inspired you to become a professional counselor?

Dr. Morgan: I received my bachelor’s degree in communication and began working in an environment that was largely competition-based. I didn’t feel it was the right fit for me. I went to see my high school counselor and explained that I needed to find a new career path, one in which I would be helping people and not simply competing for their money. He told me that his job as a school counselor was a great one, and that I should consider it. I soon enrolled at DePaul University for my Master’s in Human Services and Counseling. Back then in Illinois, you had to have 2 years of teaching experience to become a school counselor, so I began my journey toward becoming an LPC. I had a fantastic professor that studies the impact of substance abuse and from him I learned that treatment for substance disorders was my passion. I began working on my practicum and internship hours at a treatment facility for men facing long prison sentences for a “third strike.” It was an amazing experience.

Sounds intense.

Dr. Morgan: Yes, but it was an experience that really launched my career in substance abuse treatment. I wrote my Master’s thesis on treatment matching for substance use disordered clients in order to help prevent relapse and consequent prison time. I learned that not everyone is appropriate for twelve step treatment programs, and that through the group counseling process clients could get the support they needed to remain drug and alcohol-free.

What did you do after graduation?

Dr. Morgan: I began my career in the mental health field as a Program Coordinator for the Adolescent Substance Abuse Program at Campbell County Memorial Hospital in Gillette, Wyoming. This was a really great experience for me professionally but was rather taxing on a personal level. I missed my family and friends, but it was there that I earned my Licensed Professional Counselor credential. After almost four years in community mental health, I moved back to Chicago to work for the Jewish Children’s Bureau advocating for children within the context of the court system. I provided treatment and case management for boys living in group homes, which was both rewarding and heart-wrenching. It did, however, give me experience working with adolescents in an urban setting which presented different challenges than working in rural areas.
On to PhD then?
**Dr. Morgan:** Yes. I then decided to pursue my PhD in Counselor Education at the University of Northern Colorado, where I specialized in School Counseling. I wanted to work with adolescents, but also wanted a new professional challenge. It was there that I became interested in career development.

Why career development?
**Dr. Morgan:**

When I was in my doctorate program I took the career development class that they offered and remember thinking that it could be taught so much better. I had to accumulate teaching hours, so I figured I would revamp the career counseling course to make it a better learning experience for the students. I wanted my students to get excited about learning how to help someone find a direction in life. After seeing so many clients lose their way to drugs and alcohol, I wanted to learn about the ways counselors can engage clients to look forward, to engage in their own experience. I found that by helping someone develop a career goal, even one that’s temporary, it may yield rewards that last a lifetime.

What are some of the things you are currently doing in your career field?
**Dr. Morgan:** I have been involved in many state organizations that promote college and career readiness, including board membership in the Colorado Career Development Association (CCDA), the Colorado School Counselor Association (CSCA), and the Colorado Association for Career and Technical Education (CACTE). I am also a member of the National Career Development Association, which keeps me connected to all things career counseling at the national level. I absolutely love being with other career professionals that talk the same language of transformation for our students and clients. I will be applying for a fellowship position with NCDA next spring, and hope to conduct research on career counseling pedagogy as part of my one-year commitment. It is my hope that by being a part of these organizations (and bringing that expertise into my teaching), I can help my students find out what makes them tick. It’s amazing to be doing what I truly love. On a side note, I have an article coming out in the NBCC journal, “The Professional Counselor,” entitled “School Counselors’ Perceptions of Competency in Career Counseling.” I am also currently working on a school counseling textbook with Dr. Williams and some other colleagues that should be published later this year. It has been a busy couple of years at UCCS!

Lastly, do you have any advice for the first year students?
**Dr. Morgan:** It’s okay to be vulnerable, and it’s okay to fear the unknown. It is also important to reach out when you need to and avoid working in isolation—rely on each other as well as the faculty. I recommend that every student find their own “counseling buddy,” someone in the program with whom you can rely and talk to about tough challenges throughout the program as well as when you are both new professionals. It is necessary to have someone you trust, that gets what you are going through and who is not a spouse, close friend, or family member. Sparing your partner or close friends the details of every struggle will help keep your counseling program in perspective and your personal life fulfilling.
~ Recommended Reading ~

Jeffrey A. Kottler, *On Being a Therapist*

![Image of "On Being a Therapist"]

Carl R. Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*

![Image of "On Becoming a Person"]
~ Upcoming 2014-2015 Events ~

July 25       Summer Social 7pm Jose Muldoons
August 20 (TBD)       Sky Sox Game
August 27       Monthly Open Meeting 7:30-9pm
September 17  Monthly Open Meeting 7:30-9pm
September 19   CAMFT Conference (Arvada, CO)
September 26  Regional Professional Development Day
October 29      Monthly Meeting 7:30-9pm
November 5-7    CSCA Conference (Loveland, CO)
December        Events and Membership deadlines TBA
February 20    Induction Ceremony & Research Poster
               Symposium 6-9pm (More info to come)
March 12-15   ACA Conference (Orlando, FL)
April 4-5     CAPT Conference (Denver, CO)
April 4       CCDA Conference (Denver, CO)
April 9-10    CCA Conference (Denver, CO)
~ Editor’s Note ~

My name is Josh Plunkett and I am currently on the clinical mental health track in the 2012 day cohort. After spending much of my undergraduate years heavy influenced by the radical social theories Foucault and Derrida, my academic focus shifted to the more introspective modes of mental events and philosophy of mind. I soon found myself following in my late father’s footsteps of becoming a counselor. My counseling interests are assuaging issues surrounding depression and anxiety and more specifically how they affect family systems and childhood dynamics. While I do love counseling, my true passion is education. The short term plan when I graduate aside from getting licensed is to get my doctorate in educational research, leadership and policy.

We want to hear from you!

If you have questions, ideas, suggestions for the newsletter, please contact either Sarah Anderson at sea740@comcast.net, Josh Plunkett at jplunket@uccs.edu, Vicky Thomas at victoria.mae@gmail.com, Ariel Adams aadams@uccs or Elizabeth Burgin at elizabethe.burgin@gmail.com.

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