Greetings from the Graduate Coordinator

I imagine most of our faculty would agree that one of the unanticipated benefits of our jobs is the movement in our relationship with our graduates from teacher/mentor to colleague. It’s an inevitable transition that occurs naturally and effortlessly, and it is always deeply gratifying when we encounter it. And the possible pool from which to draw the experience grows every year. We welcomed our eighth class of graduate students this past fall. The seven classes ahead of them are spread wide across the county but a large majority of them have remained close by in graduate programs and professional positions in forensic and mental health programs agencies.

Last year Kimberly Rakiec (Class of ‘13) created a Facebook page for our faculty, students, and alumni. You can find it here. It’s called the RWU Forensic and Clinical Psychology Network and when I last checked we had 60 members. Please check it out if you have not done so already and join. You’ll find updates on research activities and accomplishments of our students and faculty, news about new positions that some of our alums have taken and interesting articles and media clips related to our research and professional interests. Kyle Gamache (class of ’09) recently posted an article he published with Drs. Platania and Zaitchik. Some of the posts are about serious challenges in our field and some are more light-hearted and comical. All the posts, comments and likes are occasions for us to share what is important to us and what direction our professional interests and passions carry us. It has had a slow-to-develop start but the page has been fairly active lately. I encourage all of us to visit, post, comment, and like, or not. It is a community comprised of us. A way for us to stay connected, updated and in touch with each other. I hope it grows and becomes a more active exchange of information for us all. It’s a place where our current students can learn about the roads taken by the students who came before them and for our faculty to keep current students and alumni informed about their professional activities. I always enjoy reading about a research project, a new job, research article or media story related to our work that a current or past student shares. It has also been a place where I frequently encounter that transition from teacher to colleague with our past graduates posting about graduating from an advanced program or announce assuming a new exciting professional position in the forensic or mental health field.

This has been a year where I have enjoyed a number of those encounters. Let me tell you about a few of them. Trevor Barrese and Nate Cook (both class of ’08) have completed their Ph.D. requirements and have matched at APA-approved internships in Boston. Trevor wrapped up his dissertation at CUNY-John Jay College and will be interning at the Cambridge Health Alliance/Harvard Medical School beginning this summer. Nate is wrapping up at the clinical psychology program at URI and will be interning across the Charles River (on the Boston side) at Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School. It will great to have Trevor back in New England after five years of exile on the isle of Manhattan. For Nate, it is a return of one of Massachusetts’s own sons. I know they will be busy next year working 60-hour weeks but I already have them slated for a few in-service trainings for our faculty and students. It’s time for them to teach their old instructors a few new tricks. Alums will be welcomed. You can hear all about it on our Facebook page.

This issue marks the completion of seven years (fourteen issues) of reporting the accomplishments of faculty and students (current and former) in the master’s program in forensic psychology. It also marks the end of my stretch as newsletter editor. As I was preparing this column, I looked back over the previous issues and I am quite amazed at the places our graduates have gone in their professional careers since graduating from our program. It is also quite extraordinary how our graduates have kept in close contact with us throughout the years. When I started the newsletter in 2007, our first class had one semester left to graduate, yet their contributions to the field of forensic psychology were already mounting – starting with the Munsterberg Conference hosted by John Jay College of Criminal Justice in the spring of 2007. Not only were our students notably present on the conference program, they also had the chance to meet former Attorney General Janet Reno! Since then, the opportunities we have extended to our graduate students have led to a consistent presence at annual meetings of professional associations such as APLS, APA, and ATSA. As you will see in this newsletter we have also maintained a commendable record of connecting our students with professional positions in the field after graduating. Reporting on the successes of our grads has been rewarding and fun. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Alejandro Leguizamo as the incoming Newsletter Editor.

Judith Platania
Greetings from the Graduate Coordinator, continued

I also had the pleasure of welcoming back three alums from the class of ’11. Tim Owens, a staff clinician at the Rhode Island Training School, visited us recently with a presentation to my undergraduate forensic psychology class and at a Brown Bag meeting for our current graduate students. I think it was a pleasure for our current students to behold a surviving graduate who is gainfully employed in a job that he loves and is excited about. Jennifer Rodi (Class of ’11) is currently a clinician in the prison mental health program within the Massachusetts prisons and is scheduled to come to our Brown Bag meeting in April where she will be sharing her story about the trials and tribulations of being a mental health professional in a prison. She told me she loves the work but don’t read anything into that. She also told me she likes to go home at night and get the barbed wire in her rear-view.

Jessica Costigan (some of you may remember her as Jessica Rossiter) is a forensic interviewer with the Bristol County DA’s Office and will likely be supervising one of our current graduate students at her practicum placement. (Now that is truly gratifying news to share.) We are currently making arrangements for her to deliver the final Brown Bag of the year in May. It would be impossible for me provide updates on all the members of our ever-growing community that we have formed with each other.

Dr. Platania has limited my word length for this piece, and, as you know, she counts the words, twice, and, no, I did not have to write it in APA-style. She told me I had to but I simply told her no. I can do that, but that isn’t the case for the current students. And if you need any further confirmation about that...just ask one of the alums on the Facebook page. So, if you want to learn more about what some of the faculty are doing or what some of the alumni are doing or if you want to talk about what you are doing (professionally speaking; no posts about what you had for dinner or pics of your dog on Halloween or selfies of you on vacation) that’s what our families and friends are for), please tell us so we can check it out.

Enjoy the remaining spring semester and have a great summer!

We waited so long for it!

Frank DiCataldo, Ph.D.

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**AAFP Distinguished Contributions to Forensic Psychology Award**

Dr. Matt C. Zaitchik

This year’s recipient of The Distinguished Contributions to Forensic Psychology Award was granted to Dr. Matt Zaitchik at the annual meeting of the American Psychology-Law Society in New Orleans. This prestigious award is offered at the discretion of the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Forensic Psychology (AAFP). In Dr. Zaitchik’s talk, titled “On Being a Teacher,” he addressed his personal journey and insights regarding the relationship between life experiences and career goals and the characteristics of being a teacher/mentor. We are very proud to have him honored in this manner by his colleagues in forensic psychology. Kudos, Matt!

Class of 2008 and forward

Graduates of our master’s in forensic psychology continue to thrive in forensic and clinical educational and professional settings. We report their successes below.

**Class of 2008**

Trevor Baresse will be interning at the Cambridge Health Alliance/Harvard Medical School. Trevor successfully defended his dissertation in Clinical Psychology at the CUNY-John Jay College in New York City this past year.

Nate Cook will be interning at The Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School in Boston. Nate successfully defended his dissertation at the University of Rhode Island in their clinical psychology program.

**Class of 2009**

Kyle Gamache shared authorship with Dr. Judith Platania and Dr. Matt Zaitchik on a manuscript published (2013) the **Open Access Journal of Forensic Psychology** titled: Evaluating Future Dangerousness and Need for Treatment: The Role of Expert Testimony, Attributional Complexity, and Victim Type. Jillian Rivard (Rowback), currently a doctoral student in legal psychology at Florida International University presented two papers addressing interviewing techniques at the annual meeting of AP-LS in New Orleans, LA.

**Class of 2010**

Alison Magnotti is employed as a mental health counselor with UMass Medical School Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital.

**Class of 2011**

Rebecca Nelson was accepted into the Ph.D. program in Clinical Psychology at URI. She will commence study in the fall of 2014. Tim Owens, Jennifer Rodi, and Jessica Costigan (Rossiter) return to RWU to provide Brown Bag presentations to our current students.

**Class of 2012**

Jessica Crawford accepted a clinical position with Advocates, Inc., a non-profit in Worcester in their jail diversion program.

**Class of 2013**

Jennifer Heath began her first year in the clinical psychology Psy.D. program at Florida Institute of Technology.

**Class of 2014**

Krystyn Kowalski and Lauren Whittle have been accepted into the clinical psychology Psy.D. program at MSPP.
This year’s meeting of the American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) was held in New Orleans, LA. In addition to Dr. Zaitchik’s recognition, our faculty and students were present to share the results of their research in poster, paper and panel presentations.

**Panel Presentation**

The Teaching, Training, and Careers Committee hosted a special panel on Teaching Psychology and Law in the 21st Century: Implementation and assessment of innovative teaching strategies devised to promote experiential learning. This panel featured Drs. Garrett L. Berman, Chair of the AP-LS Teaching, Training and Careers Committee along with Matt T. Huss, Scott E. Culhane, and Stephen J. Ross. Each discussed using new tools to teach psychology and law.

Dr. Berman presented Learning by Doing! Encouraging and Implementing Active Learning in the Classroom. The implementation and use of experiential learning in the classroom is gaining popularity and can be used as one of the criteria to evaluate teaching effectiveness. His presentation focused on the importance of incorporating active learning strategies in psychology and law classes. A wide range of teaching techniques were discussed including the development of mock trials, jury selection, use of engaging films, and how to engage students in focus groups. How implement these experiential exercises along with the advantages and disadvantages of executing these various approaches were also evaluated and discussed.

**Paper Presentation**

Kyle Gamache (class of 2009) presented a paper titled: Active shooters: The predictive utility of critical factors on the magnitude of the event. Kyle shared authorship on this research project with Dr. Judith Platania, Dr. Matt Zaitchik, Ryan Weipert, (class of 2009), Samantha Morin, and Kristen Morvillo Dillon. This research was part of a paper session titled: The Emerging Areas: Cyberstalking, active shooters, legal intervention fatalities, and white-collar crime.

**Poster Presentations**


Dr. Platania served as an expert reviewer for this year’s conference submissions in the category of Juries – Estimator Variables.

(photos by beadmobile)
Professional Development

Publications


DiCataldo, F. (in press). What we know about juvenile sex offenders: A technical brief on the state of the current research literature. Published by the National Center for Juvenile and Family Court Judges, Reno, Nevada


Professional Training

Dr. DiCataldo provided a half-day pre-conference workshop at the ATSA Annual Conference, October, 2013, Chicago, IL, entitled The Assessment of Sexually Abusive Youth within a Developmental Framework

Television Interview

Dr. Leguizamo was interviewed as an expert on sex offenders for a news special on Child Sexual Abuse to be aired on the Spanish-language national TV network MundoFox in May. The aim of the special is to raise awareness about child sexual abuse among Latinos and how to prevent it.