

Student Speak

The Official Newsletter of the Ohio Psychological Association of Graduate Students (OPAGS)

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OPAGS

Hello and Welcome!

Welcome back to the second OPAGS e-newsletter, "Student Speak.." I hope that this edition finds you relaxed and rested from your summer break.

Inside this edition, you will find an introduction to your new OPAGS Committee members, as well as articles that touch on diversity, confidentiality, advocacy and social networking. Sit back and have a nice, refreshing read before hitting the books!

Once again, thanks for reading and enjoy!

Sincerely,

Susan Wilson, Ohio University
2009-2010 OPAGS Past-Chair
2009-2010 APAGS Chair-Elect
susanwilson04@gmail.com

Chair Susan Wilson is a fourth year clinical psychology student at Ohio University. For more information on the OPAGS Board, including information on joining a committee, visit www.obpsych.org and click on "Students and Careers."

Congratulations to the newly elected 2009-10 OPAGS Board!

Chair-Elect: Trevor Peterson
Advocacy Chair: Claire Mitchell
Professional Development Chair: Molly Martinez

Open positions: Communication and Membership Chair; Diversity Chair; and, Continuing Education Chair. [E-mail Christine Agaibi at cagaibi1@yahoo.com](mailto:cagaibi1@yahoo.com) if interested.

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2008-09 Executive Committee

Chair:

[Susan Wilson](#), Ohio University

Chair-Elect:

[Christine Agaibi](#), University of Akron

Past-Chair:

[Jess Grayson](#), Ohio University

Communications and Membership Chair:

[Betsy Seng](#), Ohio University

Advocacy Chair:

[Sarah A. Cain Spannagel](#), Case Western Reserve University

Diversity Chair:

[Prachi Kene](#), University of Toledo

Continuing Education Chair:

[Linda Siroskey-Sabdo](#), Walden University

Professional Development Chair:

[Danielle Probst](#), Ohio University

New Leadership!

OPAGS

Hello Fellow OPAGS members!

My name is Trevor Petersen and I'm the next chair-elect of OPAGS. This upcoming school year, I'll be a fourth year clinical psychology graduate student, in the child track, at Ohio University.

I'm excited to serve on the OPAGS committee for the next few years. I hope to contribute significantly to the extant pursuits of the association as well as spearhead progress in other important areas. I plan to promote increased communication and partnerships among graduate students, and between graduate students and professionals across the state of Ohio.

I will also encourage increased dialogue and

creative problem solving regarding internship shortage issues. Self-care among graduate students is another important area of concern that is on my agenda to address. Finally, recruiting greater participation of graduate students in advocacy efforts is a top priority.

Ultimately, my hope in serving as chair-elect and later chair of OPAGS is to enhance collaborative efforts between graduate students and professionals that will improve the field of psychology and the services it offers both here in Ohio and nationally.

Best,
Trevor Petersen, Chair-Elect
Ohio University
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An Introspective Examination of Cultural Competence

Diversity involves variation along such dimensions as ethnic identity, sexual identity or orientation, racial identity, national origin and gender. It has been consistently recognized that clinical psychology does not accurately reflect the diversity in the society (Nagayama Hall, 2006). Moreover, the field's efforts to promote cultural competence have been criticized as being too simplistic (Sleek, 1998). In this context, the American Psychological Association (1993) has recommended the following as key skills for multicultural assessment and intervention:

1. Recognize cultural diversity;
2. Understand the role that culture and ethnicity/race play in the sociopsychological and economic development of ethnic and culturally diverse populations;
3. Understand that socioeconomic and political factors significantly impact the psychosocial, political, and economic development of ethnic and culturally diverse groups;
4. Help clients to understand/maintain/resolve their own sociocultural identification; and understand the interaction of culture, gender, and sexual orientation on behavior and needs.

The goal of multicultural competence is particularly complex for the field of psychology, because psychologists are required to understand the impact of the various sociocultural dimensions on an individual level. Thus, learning about stereotypical representations of different groups may not accomplish the goal of multicultural competence in assessment and treatment. The diversity that most directly impacts clinical psychology is beyond race, gender, ethnicity, nationality or sexual orientation. To illustrate, psychologists have to address primarily the internal pressure (not the external pressure) experienced by individuals who are marginalized. Thus, true multicultural competence can be accomplished with a mindset that comprises respect rather than tolerance of diverse sets of beliefs, behaviors, and viewpoints. This mindset inevitably requires each individual to relentlessly review their own beliefs, values, and behaviors prescribed and proscribed by their own norms. It is erroneous to assume that what is true of the larger group is true of each and every individual member of that group.

—Prachi Kene, Past Advocacy Committee Chair
University of Toledo
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Ethics: Protecting Confidentiality Rights

Confidentiality is integral to the psychologist's ethical compass, but it can be counter to the other cultures in which students of psychology engage. During training, psychology students are embedded in a culture which is also quite different than that of their family or friend groups: the university. University settings come with their own cultural prescriptions and values that sometimes mesh with, and at other times are at odds with, the ethical obligations students have as psychologists. This article discusses an ethical practice model for protecting confidentiality rights (Fisher, 2008) in three situations in which psychology graduate students are faced with confidentiality issues in the academic setting: with clients, with students and with faculty.

The first step of the practice model is preparation: gaining knowledge about ethical and legal responsibilities, clarifying one's own personal position regarding confidentiality and developing plans around that position, choosing reliable consultants and preparing to discuss confidentiality with clients. In a university setting, the psychology student must learn both the state laws that govern their practice and the university policies which are in place to protect students. Graduate students should know not only the situations in which they are obligated to report confidential information provided by clients, but also instances in which they must report a student's behavior to the proper campus authorities. Graduate students should also be aware of the limits of confidentiality in situations in which they are the student: supervision, classes and advisor relationships.

The second step of the practice model is to discuss confidentiality "up front." Graduate students should have conversations not only with their clients but also with their students and faculty about the limits of confidentiality in those professional relationships as well. By increasing one's knowledge of the limits of confidentiality, having open conversations with individuals to whom the graduate student is bound to protect confidentiality and by ensuring the protection of one's own confidentiality, graduate students can increase awareness of the importance of confidentiality and ensure clarity in the limits of confidentiality.

Another area in which preparation is key is through communication mechanisms: it is common to communicate using multiple media (phone, e-mail, etc.) but each of these media comes with inherent confidentiality risks that must be weighed against the benefits. Regarding relationships with clients, most clinics have policies regarding online communication and electronic storage of patient information; however, a good rule of thumb is to only communicate online when other more secure methods are not available. For example, online communication may be preferable if a client lives with roommates who should not have access to the information that the client is in therapy. Regarding relationships with students, online communication has become the norm, with many colleges requiring students to check their university e-mail daily. E-mail is also a convenient way to document the conversations that have taken place between student and teacher should the need arise to disclose the conversation to an academic authority. Students should be made aware of instances in which such a disclosure has been made.

Obviously, there will be occasions in which graduate students must disclose confidential information. If at all possible, it is best to obtain a client or student's consent to disclose information prior to disclosure. Additionally, it is best to inform a client or student that the information discuss will be disclosed and to which authority (e.g., "I am going to forward this e-mail to the dean of students.") In clinical contexts, the biggest advantage of being a graduate student is having a supervisor. Your supervisor serves as a compass for ethical decisions of all types, including confidentiality.

Regarding relationships with students, it is a good idea to find a faculty member whom you trust to be a resource for advice regarding student issues. Finding others with a good ethical model of confidentiality will allow our own models to mature in a safe environment.

—Betsy Seng, *Past Communications and Membership Chair*
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Social Media 101: Jump In and Join

Facebook. Twitter and Blogs—oh my! These social media tools are becoming more mainstream in our society, but what are they? And how can you use them effectively? As I've discovered, the possibilities are endless!

BLOGS

Blogs are Web sites, authored by an individual or individuals, that provide commentary on a particular topic, or serve as a personal diary. Readers of a blog can leave comments about an entry, also called a post.

The Ohio Psychological Association (OPA) and its members use blogs to educate a variety of audiences. OPA's Public Interest Committee's blog at <http://opapic.blogspot.com/> provides information about events relevant to the mental health field. Topics include mental health awareness events, information about speciality weeks such as "National Healthy Weight Week," "World AIDS Day" and more.

OPA member Dennis Doverspike, PhD, has a human resources blog, "HRLighthouse: Human Resource Management," through Ohio.com. On his blog, he covers everything from global issues to unique challenges faced in the Great Lakes and northeast areas of the United States. Dr. Doverspike says the intended audience is for anyone involved in managing human resources, from the entrepreneur running a small business, to the vice president of human resources in a large organization, to the assessment professional in the public sector. To visit his blog, go to www.ohioverticals.com/blogs/hrlite/.

If you're interested in starting your own blog, there are several good, free sites available: Blogger (www.blogger.com) or WordPress (www.wordpress.com). Both are easy to use and allow you to post with just a click of the mouse. Both sites also offer free, built-in templates so you don't have to worry about design or paying for a designer.

LINKEDIN

LinkedIn (www.linkedin.com) is a social networking Web site mainly used for business connections. Its format looks similar to a resume. Start on LinkedIn by creating your comprehensive profile. This is where you can add information about your current and past jobs, including detailed descriptions, education information and tell others what you are looking for on LinkedIn, such as career opportunities, consulting offers, job inquiries, reference

requests getting back in touch. LinkedIn also provides you with the ability to ask past colleagues to recommend you for your work.

Once your profile is set up, you can find colleagues, make new connections with someone in a related field or find old classmates. LinkedIn is another good source for finding a job, as it has a jobs search feature. When you find a job you are interested in, LinkedIn will tell you if any of your connections work there or if they know anybody in that organization so you can begin networking with them.

Groups and organizations also can create their own page on LinkedIn for users to congregate and talk about a variety of topics. OPA recently created a LinkedIn page so members can network. Visit www.linkedin.com and in "search groups" type Ohio Psychological Association. Only OPA members are allowed to join and view the topics. To join LinkedIn, you just need to register and create your profile and password.

FACEBOOK

Facebook (www.facebook.com) touts itself as "a social utility that connects people with friends and others who work, study and live around them." Facebook users create a profile, which can contain information such as: activities; interests; favorite TV shows, movies and books; contact information; education; work; and, groups/organizations. Users also have the ability to post photos; share links; provide updates about their lives; and, comment to others. Facebook boasts more than 150 million active users.

Businesses and organizations also can create profiles to market themselves and allow members to network online. Facebook users can become "fans" of the businesses, which puts the business's icon on their personal page. OPAGS has its own Facebook page. Make sure you search for it and become more active in the organization!

Dr. Doverspike also is on Facebook because of his position as a psychology professor at the University of Akron. "I made my own page because that is how all the students communicate with each other and that's how I can stay in touch with current students and alumni," he said. "My personal page has been a huge benefit in terms of staying in touch."



TWITTER

“What are you doing?” That is the main question behind Twitter (www.twitter.com), a service for friends, family and co-workers to communicate and stay connected through the exchange of quick, frequent answers. However, the catch is that your “tweet” or post, can only be 140 characters in length.

Once on Twitter, you can follow users or “tweeple” and receive updates. They can choose to follow you back, meaning that they will receive your updates.

Reporters from some of Columbus’s big television stations have Twitter accounts, which allows me to stay updated on what stories they are working on and if they are looking for someone in particular to comment on a story. In December, 2008, one station requested story ideas when I mentioned holiday stress. From there, I had them contact Dr. Craig Travis for an on-air interview.

I’ve also become a “follower” of several associations. It is informative to see what others are doing and to bounce ideas off them. Or, if I have a quick question about something, there is always someone on Twitter to help. My fellow tweeples also post informative pieces about marketing, public relations or association related work that has helped me at OPA. I also use Twitter to promote OPA’s events and psychological related stories to drive traffic to our Web site.

Twitter can be helpful in the job hunt. If you follow <http://twitter.com/GetCliPsychJobs> or <http://twitter.com/jobshouts> you receive job openings.

Twitter isn’t only about online networking—many tweeples meet in person at “Tweetups” to network. Several organizations have hosted tweetups at their respective businesses to show off their facility to promote themselves.

Before you sign up and start “tweeting,” first think about your objective to be on Twitter. To market yourself? To meet new people? Next, be wise when selecting a username. Don’t make it anything obscure. Make sure to put your real name when asked for it so people can begin to recognize you. Also make sure your one line profile is filled with meaningful information, including your work information. People are more likely to follow you if your bio is specific. In addition, to be a successful Tweeter, you have to remember that Twitter is a two-way street. Don’t always post meaningless updates about your life. No one cares that you ate toast for breakfast. Share information and helpful links and comment back when others share information. And, as always—just because you’re on a social media site doesn’t mean you have to abandon good spelling and grammar. While Internet abbreviations and lingo are looked at as okay, (for example, RT in the Twitter world means retweet), misspelled, rambling messages are not.

Now that you know a little more about the new world of social media on the Internet, take some time to do some further exploring. As an Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) Platform Status Report called “User Generated Content, Social Media and Advertising,” stated, “...if you’re not on a social networking site, you’re not on the Internet.”

—Katie Thomas,
OPA Director of Communications and Education
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Wilson elected chair of APAGS

Susan Wilson, a fourth year clinical student at Ohio University and past chair of the Ohio Psychological Association of Graduate Students (OPAGS), is moving on up in the psychology world! Susan was recently elected chair-elect of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS).

Susan will begin her term as chair-elect in August 2009. In August 2010, she will step up to the chair role, and then the past-chair position.

As chair-elect, Susan will serve on the APAGS Executive Committee, which works to advise, guide, and consult with the APAGS Committee. Her specific chair-elect duties include serving as the executive committee liaison for a third of the APAGS committee, subcommittee and task force chairs; reporting on the chair-elect and official liaison activities to the full APAGS Committee; and, preparing to serve as an APAGS voting member on the APA Council of Representatives and non-voting member on the APA Board of Directors.

Advocacy: Make a Difference in the Field

In the field of psychology, we often work to facilitate change in the lives of the clients with which we work. However, in our steadfast dedication to working with our clients and tackling school commitments, we may miss opportunities to facilitate change within the field of the mental health—changes that will ultimately affect our careers. When we advocate for the field of psychology, we not only advocate for the value of the services we provide, but we also advocate for the people with whom we have the privilege to work.

The American Psychological Association (APA) consists of approximately 150,000 members. Graduate students, although not recognized as “full members,” make up approximately one third of APA’s membership and form the branch of APA known as the American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS). Within APAGS, there is a branch called the Advocacy Coordinating Team, or ACT. APAGS-ACT is a student-run, national network consisting of six regional advocacy coordinators, over 50 state/territory advocacy coordinators, and approximately 300 campus representatives. The ACT network is a collaborative network that is responsible for notifying students and professionals in graduate programs about legislation pertinent to mental health. Through this network, individuals can gain current updates on legislation as well as advocate on behalf of the field of mental health. Although at times advocacy appears to be an uphill battle in which we continually spin our wheels, we have also managed to accomplish the passing of legislation to advance the field. One example of such an accomplishment is mental health parity.

For approximately a decade, mental health professionals have worked to gain mental health parity in this nation. Finally, in the fall of 2008, Congress passed the Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, which will apply to health plans beginning Jan. 1, 2010. With the passing of this Act, benefits for mental health and substance use will be no more restrictive than benefits for physical health. The implementation of this Act will have a profound impact on individuals affected by mental health and substance abuse concerns. However, there is still room for more growth in the field of psychology, and APA is working to establish other legislation and further advance the field.

Currently, APA is advocating for three main legislative issues pertinent to mental health. One legislative issue pertains to Medicare reimbursement. In 2007, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) increased reimbursement rates for evaluation and management service codes, thereby increasing Medicare costs by \$4.5 billion. In efforts to maintain budget neutrality and to account for the added Medicare costs, CMS decreased the reimbursement codes for other services, including mental health and psychological assessment services. Following strong advocacy from mental health providers, Congress passed legislation through the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act in July 2008, which restored some money for the psychological reimbursement code cuts. This restoration, however, will only last

through December 2009. Therefore, APA is advocating that Congress extend the restoration through December 2011. At this time, service codes will be under the next five year review.

Also in the realm of reimbursement, APA is advocating that mental health providers be reimbursed for evaluation and management services, which would include such services such as consultations. Psychologists already engage in evaluation and management services, but currently, they are not reimbursed for these services. By advocating for evaluation and management reimbursement codes, mental health providers could accurately define and get reimbursed for their work.

The third issue that APA is currently advocating for is related to Health Care Reform. President Obama and his administration have emphasized a focus on health care reform. APA and mental health providers are advocating that mental health services be included in the comprehensive health care reform plan. More specifically, APA is advocating that psychologists and mental health providers be integrated into primary care plans.

Although APA is a national organization that works to influence positive change in the field of psychology, there are many ways that state organizations, such as OPA, have succeeded in advocacy efforts as well. For example, as of January 2009, the Sequence of Training Bill (House Bill 503) was signed by Gov. Strickland, allowing for students in graduate programs to sit for licensure upon completion of their doctoral program. Visit OPA’s Web site at www.ohpsych.org for updated information about the bill.

With all the responsibilities of a graduate student, few appear more important than the role of advocating on behalf of the field in which you will work. Advocating is quick, easy and extremely valuable. How can you get involved? For academic institutions that have ACT Campus Representatives, your campus representative will routinely e-mail you regarding update information. Taking action often involves clicking on a link to submit a form letter to your representative or senator. It may also involve making a quick phone call to a government office. Both modalities of advocating are quick and easy. If you do not have a campus representative, please consider becoming the campus representative for your program.

You can also advocate through OPA as announcements about important legislative issues within the state are submitted over the OPA member listserv. Their Web site also provides detailed information about how to advocate: www.ohpsych.org/advocacy.aspx.

—Kristin Anne Hoff, M.A.
State Advocacy Coordinator, Ohio, Advocacy Coordinating Team, American Psychological Association of Graduate Students (APAGS)
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History of OPAGS

The OPAGS was originally the vision of Michael Ranney, executive director of the Ohio Psychological Association (OPA). OPAGS remains one of only a handful of graduate student psychological associations in the United States.

In August 2000, the first student summit was held in Columbus, Ohio. At that meeting, Michael Ranney presented and discussed his vision for the development of OPAGS. In September 2001, a draft of the by-laws was considered by a newly elected OPAGS Board, headed by Jackie Scheff of Xavier University.

In July 2002, the first OPAGS Summer Workshop proved a successful beginning to our networking and educational efforts. This event has become an annual one, held each spring.

During the 2002-03 year, OPAGS received national recognition as the Outstanding State Provincial Student Organization during the APA State Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C.

The 2007-08 academic year was marked by the renovation of the OPAGS mentoring program.

In 2009, OPAGS again received the Outstanding State Provincial Student Organization during the APA Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. Ohio is the only state to win this award twice.

Student Involvement Opportunities at OPA Convention

Mark your calendars for Oct. 21-23, 2009, for OPA's 60th Anniversary Celebration and 2009 Convention at Quest Conference Centers near Polaris Parkway, Columbus!

Students have many opportunities to become involved, including:

- 1) The Student Poster Session on Friday, Oct. 23. Register now at www.ohpsych.org/poster.aspx
- 2) Volunteering at workshops. Contact kcrabtree@ohpsych.org to volunteer.
- 3) Attending. Students receive a special discount, and rates are heavily discounted for paid OPAGS members. Register at www.ohpsych.org/convention.aspx

We hope to see you there!

From OPA to Capitol Hill



The city of Washington, D.C., boasts a unique atmosphere where passionate people from all corners of the nation come to share their ideas, create new policies, educate fellow citizens and defend their positions through debate. This continual exchange is not limited to policymakers within the federal government, but extends to a myriad of roles including lobbyists, policy analysts and people in the non-profit sector. Washington's position as the center of the United States federal government allows it to host organizations of varying extent and concentration where political innovations are developed. However, political discourse is not Washington's only defining characteristic; it also serves as a center for the arts, sciences and American culture with the Smithsonian Institution, historically significant monuments, architectural achievements, and outstanding universities. These distinctive characteristics combined make Washington an ideal place to come and draw from all that it has to offer.

I came to Washington in January 2009 for an internship with Congressman Jim Jordan, who represents my hometown of Waynesfield, Ohio's fourth congressional district. Previously, I spent two quarters interning with the Ohio Psychological Association where I focused on advocating for policies that affect the field of psychology within the Ohio General Assembly. This experience not only allowed me to combine my passion for psychology and politics, but also piqued my interest in the legislative process. I observed committee hearings where new legislation was discussed and debated, performed background research on policies that were introduced and even met with my state senator and representative to advocate for psychology through OPA's Legislative Day. The extensive process that every piece of legislation must go through before it is considered for a vote, let alone before it becomes a law, fascinated me. I thoroughly enjoyed being an advocate for a subject that deeply interests me, but wanted to experience what it was like to be involved in the policymaker's side of the process. Thus, I chose to pursue an internship with the United States Congress where I could experience the policymaking atmosphere in Washington.

My responsibilities as an intern on Capitol Hill were largely centered on the constituents. I answered phone calls and organized letters from concerned constituents wanting to voice their opinions, share their ideas or tell the Congressman to vote a certain way on a particular bill. I have realized that the constituents' voice is taken seriously, as each phone call, letter or fax that the office receives is entered into a database and responded to with an extensive letter explaining the Congressman's position. The number of phone calls or letters the office receives is largely dependent upon the level of controversy of the bills that are up for a vote. When Congress discussed the stimulus package, the phones rang nonstop with people pleading the Congressman to vote one way or another. The calls certainly slowed down after the stimulus was passed, but constituents soon found other issues to express their opinion about. Working with the constituents in this way has allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the needs and concerns of the fourth district and how those are reflected in the Congressman that they voted for and his stance on the issues.

The most important thing that I have realized through working on the Hill is that the political culture of Washington is largely centered on what action the federal government will take. Lobbyists play a crucial role in making Congress aware of how certain legislation will affect their organization and whether it should be supported or opposed. They are the side that influences Congress through sending information that outlines their organizations' goals and positions or meeting with one of the Congressman's legislative assistants in regards to a particular issue. My experience has been on the side that chooses what action to take, where not only Congressmen, but also legislative assistants, chiefs of staff and even interns have the liberty to decide who they talk to, what mail they choose to read and how they will respond to hundreds of requests to vote a certain way. While I had an idea of the influencing aspect of the legislative process through my internship with OPA before coming to Washington, I now have an even greater understanding of the importance of having an equal exchange of ideas from constituents and lobbyists to the Congressman to maintain the principle of democracy that founded this nation.

My experience in Washington was fantastic. I came into working for the federal government at a crucial time with a changing administration and an ailing economy that needed to be addressed. I loved being in the center of the political action and knowing what issues Congress was debating at any given moment. It was incredible to take part in something that greatly influences every citizen in the nation. I highly recommend interning in Washington to anyone who has an interest in politics and the inner workings of the legislative process.

To learn more about interning on the Hill, visit your representative or senator's Web site to receive information on the application process.

—Susan Manchester