

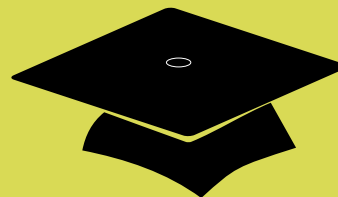
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Newsletter for School of Education and Psychology

UNRAVELLED



Power for Mind & Soul



Two semesters wrapped up into one:
Here's to 2020-2021!

Telehealth Services in the Age of a Pandemic



Life almost returned to normal with the start of the fall semester. As usual, students returned to campus at the end of August. However, many changes were put in place in response to COVID-19. The counseling program added a new approach to its therapy services in the form of telehealth services. Telehealth services focus on connecting counselors and clients via technology. This was a very new experience not only for the clients, but also for our counseling students in training. Jonathan Vega and Gaby Garland have both been in the Clinical Mental Health master's program for approximately two years. Both had taken Practicum I and II courses that consisted of meeting with college and community members for counseling sessions. In addition, they had also received training on appropriate and ethical approaches toward counseling. Vega explains that he translated the skills he learned in the Practicum courses into his internship at Centerstone, a local school-based agency. However, during their time in the program, neither student had previously provided telehealth services, until the pandemic changed everything. The two students shared their experience of training and transitioning from in-person to online interactions with their clients.

To read more about this story, continue to page three.

FROM THE DEAN'S DESK

Here in the School of Education and Psychology, we have finished our fall semester and are midway through a winter semester, both of which have looked and felt a bit different than in the past. However, with that being said, this academic year has been a great success in many ways. Students who could not attend classes in person due to quarantine or isolation did not miss important learning, because our professors faithfully and effectively used HuddleCam Go cameras, Zoom, and our learning management system. We have worn masks, kept our distance, wiped down desks and workstations, and foregone usual celebrations and festivities—all in an effort to stay safe and well. Despite these challenges, we deem this year a wonderful success, because now more than ever, we are focused on our mission to prepare effective Christian professionals who demonstrate commitment to the pursuit of truth, wholeness, and a life of service in a diverse society. Throughout the year, we have seen evidence that we are accomplishing this goal.



Tammy Overstreet, PhD

In August at our Welcome Back party, we celebrated 100 years of suffrage, which seemed fitting since 2020 was an election year, and Tennessee was the last battleground state for ratification of the 19th Amendment. We passed out yellow roses (symbols of the suffrage movement) to all attendees and 100 little scrolls containing a unique and interesting suffrage fact. As we celebrated on Summerour's front steps, a highlight of our evening was a visit by Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who read portions of the Declaration of Sentiments. While she wore clothes from the suffrage era, she looked a lot like Professor Faith Laughlin. Our look back through history and an emphasis on the privilege of being voters is an example of how we help our students continue in their growth as effective Christian professionals.

At the end of the fall semester, we held intimate dedications for students in individual programs. We missed being able to come together as a school and to include family members and friends in a school-wide dedication, but we did not let slip by us the opportunity to dedicate our students to the Lord. They are indeed "called to serve."

As Winter 2021 closes, one sentiment remains strong among faculty and staff here in the School of Education and Psychology. We are incredibly blessed to work with our students, both in person and virtually. Students' presence on campus energizes and refreshes us, and we have been reminded to focus on what really matters: our relationships with students and colleagues, and especially with Jesus. We will never again take for granted the privilege of working face-to-face with our students. We look forward to the day when we can see their smiles, enjoy food with them, and have crowded events, but we know that being together at all is blessing enough! We have important work to do—training up effective Christian professionals—and even a pandemic did not stop that from happening. If anything, it made us more determined than ever to do our work well and more focused than ever on achieving the most important outcomes. We look forward to Fall 2021, which we pray will see a return to more normal times but will retain the good that grew from the challenges.

Telehealth Services in the Age of a Pandemic

(continued from page 1)

Like with any change, such modifications were not easy at first. Vega explains: “With COVID-19 affecting our campus at an alarming rate, training in teletherapy was far more fast-paced. Confidentiality was the biggest concern, so finding the appropriate setting and software took time. Once the department found the appropriate tools, it was a matter of translating our in-person skills to a webcam. It was not an easy process initially. Having to learn how to provide teletherapy services required a substantial amount of patience.”

Garland expressed similar feelings, describing it as very rough at first. She explains: “It was very different going from seeing a client in person to going online and only seeing their face. It was also hard getting used to and learning all of the new technology and making sure that I avoided any technical difficulties that could mess up my connection during a session.” As they learned to navigate their new way of counseling, Garland found that the transition became easier for not only herself, but for her clients too.

Vega makes the key point that the client is still always the priority, regardless of the platform being used. The two platforms are very different, though. Both Vega and Garland referenced body language as a key difference. Vega describes how in-person therapy is easier for observing behavior in a controlled environment. Garland continues by saying that students are trained to use their body language to portray themselves as engaged with their clients. In addition, they were also taught to notice differences in clients’ body language and how much information that can provide. With everything being online, such nonverbal communication and sensory feedback is harder to ascertain through electronic screens.

For the students of our counseling program, such changes are pushing them to new heights that can be quite difficult at times, but positives can still be found. Many of them believe that even in the midst of the growing pains, these new experiences are making them into better trained professionals. Garland reflects on her growth as she states: “I think that it is mostly a matter of training and also allowing yourself time to get used to a new way of delivering counseling services. I am still able to establish strong connections and develop rapport with clients through telehealth, and I am still able to show support and empathy through a screen.”

In addition to allowing themselves grace and time to process all of the changes, both Vega and Garland recognized their professors as key motivators. “My professors and supervisors were my consultants. Any concerns I had regarding transitioning to telehealth, they were quick to reassure me and to provide guidance and insight,” stated Vega. “The professors were super helpful and supportive, especially at first, since they were basically learning along with us. I kept in touch with them to discuss any difficulties or frustrations I may have been experiencing,” added Garland.

The School of Education and Psychology has been blessed with faculty and students who are willing and able to provide help to those in need, even in the midst of a pandemic.



Jonathan Vega



Gabby Garland

If you would like to receive future *Unraveled* newsletters electronically, please email uas@southern.edu and request to be added to the list.

Spotlights from the Psychology Program

The School of Education and Psychology is proud of our current students and alumni for the various ways they contribute to the school and the world. Here are two stories from the psychology program: the first from a current student who serves as the first female Student Association president of Southern and the second from an alum who now serves as a student missionary.

My name is Sheryl Kambuni, and I am a senior psychology major from Nairobi, Kenya. I have been at Southern since 2017. I originally chose to be a psychology major because I was interested in studying the mind and human behavior and observing how various factors can affect how people think, act, and feel. As I took more classes, I felt even more confident in my decision as I discovered that psychology can be applied to everything in life.

I have really enjoyed my time in the psychology program. All of my classes have been interesting, my professors are kind and understanding, and my classmates have become my good friends. My overall experience has been great!

I chose to run for SA president of Southern because I felt that God was calling me to it. In addition, serving as a student leader in various other positions on campus gave me a passion that I wanted to use to address some concerns on campus. Being a psychology major helped me understand myself, which helped me see where I need to grow as a leader, as well as understand how to interact with people. My experience at Southern has been life-changing.

My time at Southern has taught me the following lessons: take time to enjoy life, open oneself to new experiences, and learn one's limits, as it is easy to bite off more than one can chew.

After graduation, I plan to take a year to serve as a student missionary before continuing to graduate school.



Kambuni (first person on the left) during a mission trip in Bolivia

My name is Chaden Noriega-Reyes, and Southern was not my first choice at all. We could say that my mom “strongly encouraged” me to attend Southern and made it clear that it was in my best interest. At the time, I didn’t understand why she felt so strongly about it, but upon my arrival to Southern, I quickly learned that God had led me there through her.

At first, I was a business major, and although I did love that world, I found no purpose or passion in it. Then during my first semester, I took Developmental Psychology with Professor Coombs, and that class was a turning point in my life. I was hooked and fascinated by the world of psychology. I continued to study clinical psychology and graduated in May of 2020. Not one day since then have I regretted my decision.

Throughout my undergraduate years, I wrestled with the notion of serving as a student missionary. But after graduation, I finally made the choice to answer God’s call.

I was fully convinced that I was supposed to serve in Bolivia. Unfortunately, COVID-19 quickly prevented that option, and I was left at a loss. I received a list of locations that were still available, but each time I read one, I felt nothing. But when I saw Mauna Loa School in Hawaii, my heart skipped a beat. I heard His voice again, and I allowed Him to lead me here.

I am currently in Hilo, Hawaii, serving as a teacher’s aide. Knowing how to provide my students with better coping mechanisms, lessons on regulating their emotions, and showing them needed compassion are things that I would not have known how to do effectively if not for the education I received in Southern’s psychology program.

After my mission year, I plan to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology. God willing, I hope to be accepted into a program in the next couple of years and will also be pursuing any job opportunities that will help me grow as a professional in the psychology field.



Mauna Loa School in Hilo, Hawaii

Alumni Spotlight: Outdoor Education

For many of our alumni, Southern does not become just a one-time stop. Some graduate and then return to teach classes, to bring their children for college, or to take additional classes themselves. Ashley Brude did just that. She graduated from Southern Adventist University in May 2010 with her bachelor's in liberal arts education. Then, she returned to graduate 10 years later in August 2020 with her graduate degree in outdoor education. She recounts her feelings when she first heard she was attending Southern compared to her feelings as she reflects on all the memories.

Initially it was my parents who wanted me to attend Souther for undergrad. As a homebody from Kentucky, I was hesitant to move away for college, but I am so thankful they sent me. I made many wonderful memories during my time there, both as an undergrad and while in the graduate program. When taking a class from Mike Hills, my eyes were opened to how engaging environmental education could be while still fulfilling academic standards. Some of my favorite memories occurred while taking outdoor rock climbing from Viren Perumal and the horizontal and vertical caving classes from Ben Eudy.

These memories, as well as a desire to learn more and become a qualified outdoor education teacher, inspired me to pursue certain graduate-level courses. After this, Professor Carl Swafford played an instrumental part in spurring me on to join the program. During the program, Professor Monty Murdoch motivated me to develop a research proposal that I am proud of and may have the opportunity to utilize someday.

Now, I enjoy teaching grades two and three at Lester Coon Adventist School in Apison, Tennessee. It is a small school that focuses on integrating forest school aspects into standard Seventh-day Adventist school academics. While our main focus is on facilitating the growth of an ever-blossoming relationship with our Creator, I am allowed and even encouraged to teach my students valuable outdoor skills, such as how to safely use a pocket-knife and how to make a fire with flint and steel. This school is a perfect fit for me, and I am truly blessed to teach at Lester Coon Adventist School.

In my free time, my husband, Aaron, and I love to travel and have had the pleasure of visiting a few countries. We would love to have the opportunity to visit many more, with one of our top contenders being Patagonia, South America.



Brude and her students from Lester Coon Adventist School



Ashley Brude and her husband Aaron

New Faculty: Welcome Professor Katie McGrath!

There's no place like home. Our newest faculty member, Professor Katie McGrath, was born in Colorado, but she says Tennessee feels more like her true home, as she has been living in the state since 1994. As a fourth-generation Seventh-day Adventist on her mother's side and a third-generation Seventh-day Adventist on her father's side, Christian education has always been important to Professor McGrath. She attended Adventist schools from the time she was in elementary school. She then received her undergraduate degree in English and teaching certification from Southern. "I still have the folder I received from the School of Education and Psychology (SEP) as a part of our dedication ceremony. It is very special to me to now be able to give back and carry on the ministry here at Southern. There is still one professor [here] whom I actually took classes from!" Professor McGrath went on to earn her MEd in Educational Media and Educational Technology from East Tennessee State University.

After serving in Tennessee public schools for eight years, she joined the Southern faculty in 2009 as a reference librarian. Then, as of January 2020, she joined the SEP team. Professor McGrath is the director of the Teaching Materials Center (TMC) and the certification officer/state liaison for teacher licensure.

She has felt blessed to be working with the team and explained, "The SEP faculty are an amazing team, so beautifully Christ-centered in everything that is done here and always looking out for the students' best interest."

As TMC director, McGrath says, "I strive to create a space that not only empowers our teacher candidates to create amazing lessons and classroom materials, but also provides a space for collaboration and community. I'm also very excited about a grant that the Teaching Materials Center recently received to stock our space with new, up-to-date STEM education materials! As certification officer/state liaison, I strive to make the certification process as smooth as possible for our graduates and alumni, doing everything I can to shepherd them through what can at times be a maze of paperwork. This isn't a flashy role, but I pray every day that the Lord will let me brighten the corner where I am and that even as we work together on these things of Earth, the beautiful presence of the Holy Spirit will guide us, give us peace, and turn our eyes always to Jesus."

When she is not working, Professor McGrath enjoys mountain biking, trail running, overlanding, and spending with her family. "I'm married to an amazing man, and we are blessed with a 13-year-old son. We also have two black cats."



McGrath and her husband



McGrath and her family

First-Year Teaching: Pandemic Edition

Being a teacher is hard enough as it is, but then imagine having to start your first year in the middle of a school year with only two weeks to prepare. Then, two months later, must figure out how to teach during a pandemic! However, as I look back, I see how God was moving all along. He used me even in my own pain and despair.

Astrid Lizardo reflects on how her teaching experience began with a whirlwind of events after graduating from Southern Adventist University. She graduated December 19, 2019, with a degree in Elementary Education (non-licensure), and then exactly two weeks later, on January 2, 2020, she started working with seventh-grade and eighth-grade students at Adventist Christian Academy in Charlotte, North Carolina.

Everything happened so fast during my first semester as a new teacher. I didn't have time to decorate my classroom. I didn't have time to really think about the kind of teacher I wanted to be. It was crazy; I just could not keep up! When I finally felt like I was getting into the swing of things, then the pandemic came and brought a whole new slew of challenges. My school went fully online from March-May of 2020. I suddenly knew nothing all over again. I was scared and completely drained. Everyone was having a hard time grasping the lessons that we were all desperately trying to teach. Not to mention the emotional damage caused by physical isolation during those months. Kids were so sad and lonely; it was heartbreaking! Thankfully, online school began to provide a resemblance of stability and consistency, which I think everyone was craving, including myself.

I didn't know what I was doing or what was going to happen, but God always did! Once we entered lockdown, I understood why God had called me here. My students needed me, and He knew I'd also need them. It was never easy, but He provided endless ideas, energy, and love every step of the way.

Thankfully, our school returned to in-person learning in August, and no one has taken it for granted! Nevertheless, I can still see how God has used these experiences to bring positive transformation in our lives. This pandemic has made us all wear masks and yet, at the same time, it has allowed my students to take off their own "masks." They are significantly more comfortable asking questions and speaking from their hearts because of all we have gone through together. It has created an environment of acceptance, forgiveness, and love. We pray together about everything: dire concerns within their families, their doubts, temptations, struggles to treat people with love, etc. Through it all, we have seen God greatly move in our lives. My students know that God is real and alive!

Being a teacher is hard, but imagine witnessing your kids understand that Jesus really is who He says He is. Such is the blessing Lizardo has experienced in the midst of an unconventional first year experience.



Lizardo's students on zoom



Lizardo (third from the left) and her students



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