

Letter from the Director

Over the past few months, I've been analyzing data from my study of daily events and emotional experiences of students in practicum. Of all the events that students encounter during the day, the practicum event that garners the most positive emotions is student contact with peers-in-training about personal issues. The finding about the importance of peer contact makes intuitive sense: Peers-in-training can be a resource for support, both professionally and personally. For example, trainees can discuss each other's frustrations and disappointments after a difficult session, when clinical work is negatively impacting their personal lives, and when personal lives are impacting their clinical work. Also, trainees can understand their shared stressors and challenges when family and friends might not. I summarize these findings here to

make a larger point: The students in our program, both past and present, are a key reason our program is so strong.

Time and time again, I hear from colleagues in the community who speak in glowing terms about the professional and interpersonal qualities of our students, which in turn leads to compliments about our program. Similarly, applicants will often tell me that the reason they chose USD is because of a conversation with a current student or a class observation where they appreciated the quality of the teacher-student interaction. At every stage of the program, our students and alumni significantly enhance the quality of what we offer.

The work of our current and former students is featured in this newsletter. One of the articles is by

Christian Jordal, a doctoral candidate at Virginia Tech, who writes about his experiences in an MFT doctoral program. I've noticed that more and more of our students are pursuing doctoral studies. If you have an interest in learning more about doctoral program options, please contact any faculty member. We're happy to discuss this path.

I hope you have a restful, enjoyable summer. I'll be on sabbatical in the fall. Dr. Estrada will do an outstanding job as Acting Director.

Best Regards,

Todd Edwards, PhD
Program Director

Welcome

Welcome to our Sixth annual MFT Newsletter. This edition of the newsletter celebrates the accomplishments of our students and alums, and recognizes the interconnectedness of our work in the field. In speaking with and meeting other University of San Diego MFT alums, I am reminded of this sense of community. Regardless of our stage of professional development, we are cognizant of the need for continued growth and mutual support.

This year we feature articles highlighting the various options

for MFTS; whether it be pursuing a PhD, obtaining an internship, or learning to work with specific populations. Combined with Laura Sudano's reflections upon graduation and ending with the always-intriguing alumni updates, this edition of the MFT newsletter serves as a reminder of the success of our students and graduates within the larger MFT community. Enjoy!

-Gina Bongiorno, '09
MFT Program Specialist

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Reflections Upon Graduation

In past years, alumni of USD's MFT program have provided humbling reflections upon their graduation. Writing to you is an honor and I hope to depict not only my experience of the program, but that of my colleagues, as we have made this memorable journey and are now part of USD's MFT legacy.

One word disseminates throughout my reflection at USD: Risk. Though we may or may not be aware, our expedition begins before we step foot into Mother Rosalie Hill Hall. Risk begins as we search and apply to the MFT program. Then, we risk to attend the group interview and to shake a

stranger's hand, to decide to pursue higher education or make a significant career change, to be vulnerable to others during times of self disclosure, to talk to a "second year," to trust and work with our mentors, to ask questions in class, to say yes when asked out to coffee or an event by a colleague, to apply and interview for practicum sites, to travel to a strange land and not know the native language, and to display your work as a beginning therapist for your colleagues to see. The aforementioned encounters are not to be taken calmly and can only be rewarded by exposing oneself.

But with the help of the distinguished, caring faculty, as well as my respected colleagues, risk became safe. As a writer once said, "The paradox of courage is that a man must be a little careless of his life even in order to keep it." We took chances that propelled us on a track to a promising career as MFTs. I hope that you all will continue to have the courage to take risks in your own lives as we have witnessed the great outcomes of our premeditated gambles.

Congratulations Class of 2010!

-Laura Sudano, '10

Congratulations Class of 2010!

- Leila Aftahi
- Shannel Busuioc
- Nicolle Clemmer
- Laureen Copfer
- Nathan Cressall
- Jennifer Galvis
- Christina Hollis
- Megan Jones
- Nancy Kassel
- Chelsea Keller
- Andrea Knox
- Katherine LaMee
- Jacqueline Leong
- Kendal McCartney
- Mariana Mesnik
- Chandra Mika Nakamura
- Kelsey Peck
- María Pizano
- Tania Riosvelasco
- Jessica Lopez Robledo
- Brianna Salinas
- Jodi Staszak
- Laura Sudano



Above: Spanish speaking Practicum group at Graduation, May 2010

The Ph.D. Experience

The Strength of a House lies in its Foundation

The profession of MFT is dedicated to building and enhancing relationships. This is our unique contribution to the mental healthcare field. The future of healthcare delivery in the United States presents us collectively with a challenge: *How do we integrate our unique focus—relationships—and their life enhancing benefits into the larger healthcare system that is focused on diagnosis, pathology, manualized treatments, and short term outcomes?* Some say we should opt out of the debate altogether. However, if we do, it's not just our field that might be left out in the cold, it's our clients—the couples and families we work with in therapy.

The strength of a house lies in its

foundation. The contribution of the founding fathers and mothers of family therapy is unquestionable, yet the changes to the family in recent decades are undeniable. The question remains if our theories hold up, and with few exceptions, they are empirically unsubstantiated. Students are the future

“STUDENTS ARE THE FUTURE THEORISTS, RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS OF THE FIELD. THE PURSUIT OF A DOCTORATE DEGREE IS PREPARATION FOR THE FUTURE.”

theorists, researchers and practitioners of the field. The pursuit of a doctorate degree is preparation for the future.

I was fortunate to work at the San Diego Health and Faith Alliance during my practicum. I experienced firsthand how society can render clients mute and powerless. I will also have the privilege of teaching masters-level student therapists during my doctoral work. Doctoral study has deepened my understanding of the theories and practice of marriage and family therapy. It has helped me to develop the skills to teach, supervise fellow clinicians, and to develop research projects that give voice to underserved populations.

-Christian Jordal, '06

From Masters to PhD: USD to Virginia Tech

Earning a PhD was always an attractive idea to me, and seemingly the next step after an amazingly positive Masters experience at USD. I decided I wanted to be the one teaching MFT students and supervising clinical sessions, and a PhD was the vehicle for achieving such a career in academia. Consequently, I knew I would have to conquer research and statistics to pursue this goal. I enjoyed my statistics courses, but dreaded the dry, what felt like monotonous, content of my research methods courses. While I loved clinical work and understood the

value of research for the future of MFT, I was not convinced this was enough of a reason to commit the next 3-5+ years to a research-intensive PhD program. I was so excited about doing therapy and so undecided about research that I worked as a part-time research associate and part-time clinician for two years following my Masters. This experience helped me make the decision to start a PhD program, and helped me become an attractive PhD applicant.

Although I decided to pursue my PhD, I would not recommend a PhD to everyone and fortunately, I never have to do one again! I

would advise students coming from a clinical Masters program to ponder how much they enjoy reading, writing and researching at an intense pace unmatched at a Masters level. For the MFT Masters students that are unsure about research, but are passionate about their clinical work, I would recommend exploring clinically-focused programs and tailoring their further education to fit their passion. To the MFT Masters students that love research, reading and writing, the PhD is a natural next step.

-Jamie E. Banker, '04

Practicum Placements 2010-2011

Catholic Charities

Lindsey Claar
Wendy Lundy
Nina Marie Maspons
Amanda Rausch

Children's Outpatient Psychiatry

Oceanside:

Sarah Cobb
Nassim Fardghassemi
Brittney France

Central:

Kristina Stanford

Harmonium

Carolina Argote
Catherine Boatwright
Amanda Lefevre
Megan Matherly

Phoenix House

Graciela Baron
Michelle Kasney

San Diego Hospice

Kayla Jones
Vanessa Lemminger
Fanny Maizel
Melissa Mitchell
Ali Rahimzadeh
Whitney Wirth

UCSD Outpatient Psychiatric Services

Cassidy Johnson
Veronica Viesca

VA Hospital

Danielle Levy
Kathleen Wescott

UCSD Family Medicine

Megan Broderick
Kourtney Deboer
Erin Hanley
Cassidy Reilly



MFT Students & Alumni at the 2010 Evolution of Psychotherapy Conference in Anaheim, CA

Reflections of a Job Search

Job search. It sounds simple enough yet sometimes feels like an insurmountable mountain. Where do I start? What keywords or titles should I look for? Why did I get my Master's to get paid like this!!

Jokes aside, in this economy you are competing against seasoned professionals with years of experience and bright eyed interns who will take minimum wage to get a job that gives them hours. So who is the better candidate? Often times, the best candidate is found by who that person is with their experience. Odd concept, but I'll explain.

A common trend for many therapists is have an internship in graduate school, find they love a population and then work to carve out a little niche in this area. Maybe they get additional training; maybe they find additional agencies with the same population. Either way, this professional with great intentions and a zest for their job has just

limited themselves. By not exploring our profession, you are doing an injustice to yourself and your clients.

Often the best clinician is the one who has worked in a variety of settings. Working with adults doing group therapy, using play therapy while working in a group home, trying Cognitive Behavioral Therapy on a woman who escaped a domestic violence relationship or Dialectical Behavioral Therapy on a Borderline Personality Disordered patient. Does it sound like this person doesn't know what they want to do? Or are they willing to explore all the facets of this profession?

By allowing your job search to expand beyond your comfort zone, you are doing one of the key elements in therapy. Apply for a position based on the job duties, not just the job title. Many good clinicians shy away from a job because its title is Social Worker when the job duties clearly delineate a thera-

pist. If the credential desired is a MFT or a MSW, apply! Take advantage of the time of being an Intern when you can seek supervision and really explore the type of therapist you want to become. Trust me, you'll thank me for it and more importantly, your clients will grow because of it.

-Bindu Khurana, '05
President, SD CAMFT

***"BY NOT EXPLORING OUR
PROFESSION, YOU ARE
DOING AN INJUSTICE TO
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CLIENTS."***

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW
STUDENTS WHO BEGAN THIS
SPRING:**

JAWAHER ALQASSIMI

CORINNE HARDISTY

MARTAL PREWITT

**MUCH APPRECIATION TO OUR NEW MFT
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT:**

CLARE CRIERIE

**CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW
2010-2011 SGSA COUNCIL MEMBERS:**

MICHELLE KANSEY (MFT PROGRAM REP)

AMANDA RAUSCH (SPECIAL EVENTS DIRECTOR)

VERONICA VIESCA (FINANCE DIRECTOR)



USD Alums at a networking event

Intern Corner: Southwest Key Program

A USD MFT degree prepares clinicians to work in a variety of settings, one of which is a program for unaccompanied minors administered through the US Office of Refugee Resettlement. Over 85,000 minors annually enter the US unaccompanied by parents or guardians. These minors come to the US seeking to reunite with parents, escape from violence, or search for better economic opportunities. The minors come from Central America, Mexico, Somalia, China, India, and other parts of the globe. Some are victims of human trafficking, having been brought to the US to work in the commercial sex trade or to labor without wages.

When apprehended by federal immigration agents, these minors are no longer placed in prison-like detention facilities. Instead, they are housed in shelters run by non-profit agencies. In these shelters, the minors receive education, medical attention, recreational opportunities, healthy food, access to legal services, and weekly individual and group

counseling services provided by an on-site clinician. The clinician holds a "key position" and must be approved at hiring by the Office of Refugee Resettlement. Other key positions include case manager and program director

Southwest Key Program operates two shelters for unaccompanied minors in San Diego county: one in Lemon Grove and the other in El Cajon. The shelter in Lemon Grove has 10 beds in a large suburban home. The facility houses boys and girls as young as age

6 with average age 15. The relatively small size of the facility lends itself to a family feeling. The minors are technically in detention, though the facility has no fences or locked doors. In the four years the facility has existed, no minor has ever run away. One staff member attributes it, at least in part, to the fact that the minors would not want to get the staff in trouble. There is very low turnover among the staff at Lemon Grove and a high level of commitment to serving these youth.

All of the minors in the facility face deportation proceedings and some have legal relief under US immigration law which provides legal status for some categories of immigrants; notably, the J visa allows victims of abuse, neglect, or abandonment to gain legal residency. Wherever possible, Southwest Key seeks to identify a close relative living in the US to serve as sponsor for the minor. Once a sponsor is identified and screened, and upon the approval of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, the minor is released to the sponsor.

"IN THESE SHELTERS, THE MINORS RECEIVE EDUCATION, MEDICAL ATTENTION, RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES, HEALTHY FOOD, ACCESS TO LEGAL SERVICES, AND WEEKLY INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP COUNSELING SERVICES PROVIDED BY AN ON-SITE CLINICIAN."

-Vicente Vargas, '09

USD Alumni Updates

Christina Neumeyer, '95: In January 2009, Christina trained with Dr. Edna Foa, one of Time's 100 Most Influential People in 2010, and began utilizing Prolonged Exposure Therapy for Veterans suffering from PTSD as part of a UCSD/VA joint research study. Additionally, she is a study therapist for Cognitive Processing Therapy research and its' effectiveness in the treatment of PTSD.

Raymond Cameron, '96: Is a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist currently in Private Practice in Southern California and has been specializing in the field of Interpersonal Violence since 1995. Raymond has facilitated lectures, trainings, and presentations for various private & public institutions. Raymond is the current President of the Southwest Riverside County Chapter of CAMFT. He has been married to his wife Cheryl (graduate of USD Legal Assistant Program 1990) since 1992, and is the proud father of two daughters.

Karen Mehninger, '01: Is the author of *Sail Into Your Dreams: 8 Steps to Living a More Purposeful Life*, an inspirational speaker, psychotherapist, life coach, and the founder of Creative Transformations. Lives in Golden, CO and practices therapy in the greater Denver area. Specialties include life purpose and direction, life transitions, personal empowerment, and relationship issues. www.LiveAPurposefulLife.com

Emily Naughton Lindley, '04: Working in private practice part-time for PsyCare Inc., in Carmel Valley; specializing in anxiety disorders and adolescent issues. Working on completing her dissertation for her PsyD in MFT from Alliant International University, focusing on Bowen Family Systems Theory and parenting models. Enjoying life with her husband and beautiful 22 month old toddler.

Anne Wages, '04: After living in Hawaii for two years and working primarily with autistic kids and their families, Anne moved back to San Diego in February 2008. Anne began substitute teaching in classrooms within the San Diego Unified School District. She recently enrolled in a program at National University to pursue a multiple subject teaching credential at the elementary level. She has found that the knowledge and experience gained while obtaining her master's degree at USD, interning at UCSD CAPS, and working in the field, has given her an unexpected confidence in working with a diverse student population.

Michelle Behrooznia, '05: Currently working part-time as a therapist for UCSD Dept. of Psychiatry and VA Research. Working on a PTSD study for victims of

domestic violence and a treatment outcome study for children with anxiety disorders. Enjoys having the opportunity to combine her interests in research and clinical work. She is most excited to complete her hours and looks forward to taking the licensing exams soon.

Jamae Marcinko, '05: Is completing her final year with the National Health Service Corps, a program that encourages licensed

unique one to one approach to learning and life. Tyeler was brought on to develop the outreach and marketing program, after transitioning from her licensure and clinical hours. Tyeler is pleased to share that was recommended for this position from another fellow USD alumni!

Nate Woodin, '07: Nate and his wife Lien will be moving to Portland, Maine in August 2010 to be closer to family and begin a



2005 MFT Alums wine tasting in Napa valley

clinicians to continue working in impoverished areas where help is needed the most. In exchange for two years of service with NHSC, Jamae was awarded complete repayment of her student loans. Jamae received her MFT license in 2007 and provides therapy to children and families in the community of Logan Heights in San Diego. In Jamae's free time, she enjoys being with friends, traveling, and playing competitive tennis.

Brandina Morrison, '06: Currently living in central London (UK), and is a Member of the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy (BACP). Working full-time as a Transition Learning Mentor at an inner-city high school, addressing the social and emotional barriers to learning that affect young students as they transition from elementary/primary school to high school, through 1:1 mentoring sessions, group work, and parental support. Enjoying holidays throughout Europe on school breaks!

Tyeler Viel, '07: Is working for Fusion Academy and Learning Center as the Outreach and Communications Coordinator for Orange County. Fusion Academy is a private school that specializes in helping students with individualized needs through a

family of their own! Nate will be sad to leave the Healing Project, a program he started 2 years ago with several Yoga teachers in San Diego. The Healing Project has been bringing Yoga and Gardening to Foster Youth in residential care. In Portland, Nate plans to continue his work as a therapist focusing on trauma, children and adolescents, play therapy, and foster youth. He looks forward to expanding and developing the work of The Healing Project on the east coast! www.thehealingprojectsd.org

Jeehee Sung, '09: Attending Texas Tech University to obtain her PhD in MFT this upcoming Fall.

Theresa Viglizzo, '09: Works as a Mental Health Clinician at A Better Way, Inc in Berkeley, CA, providing therapeutic assessments and clinical services to foster children, ranging in age from 0-21, and their families.

Congratulations to our MFT alumni on all their accomplishments.