

MAY 2022

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

ALUMNI NEWSLETTER



A NOTE FROM OUR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

DR. ADRIEL BOALS

In the past few years, the Behavioral Science Program has needed to make a number of adjustments and changes to meet the fast-changing environment around us. We are fortunate to have a great set of faculty and students that are flexible enough to allow for these changes. This process got me thinking about what aspects of our program should not be, and are not flexible. These would be the core principles that delineate us as a program. This inspired me to create a set of BSci Core Principles, which was unanimously approved by the Program Committee and will appear in next year's Program Manual. The BSci Core Principles are listed on the following page. My hope is these core principles will serve as a guide to students and faculty, and help define who we are as a program.

*This year's
featured stories*

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BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE

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BSCI CORE PRINCIPLES

Commitment to Science

The Behavioral Science Program is grounded in a commitment to science. Generating and evaluating empirical evidence is the bedrock of our program. We strive for our work to be multidisciplinary, cross-cutting, and conform to the ethical principles outlined by the Nuremberg Code and APA Ethical Guidelines. We value all aspects of the scientific method, including creative idea generation, rigorous hypothesis testing, cutting edge variable measurement, core methodology, critical thinking skills, critical writing skills, and broad dissemination of our work. We do this with passion, commitment, focus, and a desire to never stop learning.

Commitment to Training

We are committed to training the next generation of psychological scientists. This starts with recruiting talented graduate students into our program. Once in the program, we value training in all aspects of science. This includes emphases on methodology, statistical analyses, scientific writing, professionalism, as well as expertise in areas of specialization. We expect our faculty to be committed mentors and we expect our students to be committed mentees. This commitment extends to our undergraduates as well, whether it be high quality teaching in the classroom to training undergraduate research assistants in our research labs.

Commitment to a Culture of Achievement, Cooperation, and Respect

The environment in which we work is often just as critical as the work itself. In the Behavioral Science Program, we strive to generate a work culture of achievement, cooperation, and respect. The scientific process is a team effort and we encourage collaboration both amongst members of our program and with members outside of our program. We expect members of our program to support one another, share with each other, lift each other up, and represent our program with pride that forms a culture of community.

Commitment to Inclusion & Diversity

True excellence requires that people from diverse backgrounds be able to work and learn in an atmosphere of respect, dignity, and acceptance. This value is a continuation of our commitment to culture, in that all persons who have a passion for psychological science feel welcome in our program. Our commitment to diversity and inclusion requires each of us to continuously ensure our interactions, our classrooms, and our syllabi be respectful, protect free speech, and inspire academic freedom.



BSCI BRAGS



2021-2022: A Reflection

The 2021-2022 academic year has been filled with many ups and down - from construction in Terrill Hall, COVID-19, staff turnover, the winter freeze - we have been through it.

The Behavioral Science program has showed immense amount of resiliency despite the continued challenges. As we work to rebuild our culture, community, and morale, we wanted to take a moment to reflect on a few wins we've had in the past year.

The recipient of the
Student Research Grant
from APA Div. 19
-Ruth King (2nd year)

The recipient of the Health
Behavior International
Collective Award from APA
Div. 38
-Brett Messman (2nd year)

Accepted into the G-RISE
program, which provides 3
years of NIH funding
-Kara Stuart and Isamar
Almeida (1st years)

Passing dissertation defense
-Kyjeila Latimer and Megan
Kelly (5th years)

**CHEERS TO MORE WINS
IN THE 2022-2023
ACADEMIC YEAR!**



Left to Right - Jonathan Cajas and Madasen Briggs enjoy a tasty crawfish boil!

SOUTHWESTERN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

Members of Dr. Guillot's lab stand in front of their sex differences of trauma internalization/externalization poster.



Madasen Briggs proudly represents Dr. Danica Slavish's lab with her poster on perceptions of female leader competence.



BSCI CAME FOR THE CONFERENCE AND STAYED FOR THE CRAWFISH!

In April 2022, many labs from the Behavioral Science program made their way to Baton Rouge, LA for the annual Southwestern Psychological Association (SWPA) conference.

For many students, both graduate and undergraduate, this was the first in-person conference they had attended since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

This conference was a great way to kick off conference season for students of BSci and UNT!



Left to Right - Lilly Hoskinson, Ruth King, and Jordan Connell represent the Boals Lab at SWPA with a poster on betrayal.



Not-So-First Year Interview



A word from our first year BSci colleagues

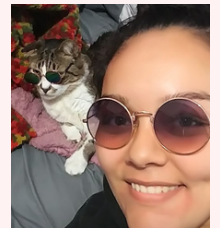
As we are wrapping up the 2021-2022 academic year, we took a moment to hear about how our first year colleagues' graduate journey is going so far.

First Year Students:

- Alexandria Aleman



Isamar Almeida



- Kara Stuart



Linda Thompson





Not-So-First Year Interview

What was something you experienced that you didn't expect coming into your first year in the BSci program?

Alexandria - How relaxed everything is. There are high expectations but mentors and professors are all really understanding.

Isamar - I had a similar experience. Everything is new and I was nervous about the amount of expectation, pressure, expectation of good quality, but I've been met with a lot of support.

What were your top struggles in your first year?

Isamar - Time management and being a self-starter. Finding balance is important!

Kara - Being a self-starter. Knowing there isn't a whole lot of pressure depending on your PI so you have to light your own fire.

Any improvements for next year?

Linda - I want to collaborate more within the department and BSci.

Isamar - I want to improve speaking skills in front of people, classes, presentations and getting more involved with the program.

What were the highlights of your first year?

Alexandria - I helped Dr. Guillot on a peer review and I'm currently working on a manuscript with Heather Lucke on metacognition and alcohol use.

Isamar - I got my first, first author manuscript and it was given a revise and resubmit.

Kara - Giving a guest lecture for Dr. Ryal's class. I was nervous but it felt really good.

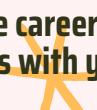
Linda - I finished all my core requirements so now I can focus on independent research and an F31 grant.

Tips for Melissa?

Kara - Reach out and don't be shy. Your best self will do your best work!

Alex - Don't make school your entire personality. We come in with hobbies and a self-care routine and it's important to continue that even when you are in grad school.

Isamar - Early on in your graduate career, talk about your goals and expectations with your mentor.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Sabrina Blackledge, PhD

ABOUT

Graduated UNT: 2017

Current Position: Team Lead - Data Visualization and Dissemination for the Texas Department of State Health Services

Location: Austin, TX

Internship: The University of Texas Southwestern (UTSW) Department of Psychiatry

Favorite Things:

- Data visualization and storytelling
- Quantitative UX and UX applications to public health
- Measurement/validation issues
- Survey design and analytics



EXPERIENCE

Diverse training in state government and academic team settings that span from large epidemiological/surveillance data, self-report/survey methods, case-control/AB studies, and secondary analyses with a heavy bent on project management and 4+ years experience as team lead.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

SINCE GRADUATING IN 2017, WHAT HAVE BEEN WORKING ON?

After I graduated, I became a post-doc research fellow at UTHealth San Antonio working as a project manager and research collaborator across Psychiatry and Pharmacology departments with NIH/NIDA funding.

After my post-doc I worked as a government research scientist for the Texas State Health Department as the primary research support to the Texas state epidemiologist. For the first year I was focused more broadly on population health issues, then when COVID-19 hit, everything became COVID-19 focused. One of my biggest personal achievements was to contribute to the state pandemic response.

The technical skills I fostered in the BSci program, such as human subjects research design, R programming and data visualization, ended up being an asset in my job and made me stand out. These experiences led me to where I am now as a Team Lead for Data Visualization and Dissemination in the Texas Department of State Health Services.

HOW DID YOU DECIDE BETWEEN INDUSTRY AND ACADEMIA?

I came into the program aiming for careers in the government-sector, including CDC or NIH. Government roles can have a huge impact and that's what motivates me in my career.

I came into the doctoral program with a master's in clinical health psychology, then took a lot of statistics courses at UNT. My work was focused on larger samples and surveys, and ended up going into substance abuse research with mentors Drs. Casey Guillot, Rex Wright, and Adriel Boals.

WHAT ARE MARKETABLE SKILLS YOU LEARNED IN THE DOCTORAL PROGRAM?

For industry-track positions, at least for the direction I went in, the most marketable skills involve project management, how to design meaningful research studies, how to think scientifically about a subject, and how to translate the research into action, which is usually in the context of a team setting. When corporations hire PhDs they want someone who can show leadership skills and think at that higher level.

Employers want someone who can think critically. They want to see that you can utilize your degree but typically don't focus so much on what that degree is specifically. (unless you pursue a highly specialized field, of course!)

WHAT IS THE MOST VALUABLE SKILL YOU LEARNED IN THE PROGRAM?

Learning how to network and reach out. The worst thing that can happen is the person you reach out to doesn't respond or are not able to take mentees. Meet up groups are also helpful. For any student that wants to explore non-academic careers, be uncomfortable! Stand out and embrace that difference.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

HOW DID YOU NETWORK WHILE IN THE PROGRAM?

I ended up working with a psychiatrist at UT Southwestern through a friend-of-a-friend. I spent a year commuting to UT Southwestern in Dallas to help them out once or twice a week. After a year, I asked if the psychiatrist would co-chair my dissertation. I highly encourage networking with big systems like Baylor Scott & White, UT Southwestern, and various universities or hospitals.

HOW DID YOU NAVIGATE THE JOB MARKET BEFORE/AFTER YOU GRADUATED?

I found mentors for the career paths I wanted to progress in, I rounded out my technical skills to include more applied applications, I translated my CV into a resume, started attending meetup groups, and of course applying. But, a lot of the job market is driven by networking, whether through government or tech, or anything else, and I found time spent doing the networking, instead of just applying, was more fruitful. In the tech industry, companies like Google have a vastly different culture than start ups. I definitely recommend getting out, meeting people, and networking to make professional connections.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL GRADUATE STUDENTS CURRENTLY IN THE PROGRAM?

Don't feel hesitation to reach out to alumni. There are now a lot of alumni who have graduated from the Behavioral Science program. This increase in alumni means an increase in support, mentorship, and jobs for students. Never hesitate to reach out for mentorship.

If you want to go into industry, think outside the box and focus on applied skills, like project management. It's helpful to have an understanding of how the research process differs in industry vs academia, and practice being able to market yourself and your skills during the interview process. Don't put it off until the last minute.

WHAT IS NEXT FOR YOUR IN YOUR CAREER?

I have only been on the data viz team for the past 4 months so right now I want to just enjoy my current role. In the future I'm interested in combining tech and government sector work as I continue to progress in my career. And also just enjoy living in Austin!

THANK YOU DR.
BLACKLEDGE!



Incoming Student

Melissa Materia

ABOUT

Alma Mater: : University of Tennessee at Chattanooga (UTC)

Degree: Master's in Psychological Sciences

Born and Raised: Grew up in north New Jersey, then moved to Collierville, TN

Favorite Things:

- Cooking and crocheting
- Travel
- Reading mystery novels
- Music: Jazz (Tony Bennett), Rock (Food Fighters), Alternative (Paramore), and R&B (Jacob Banks)



EXPERIENCE

UNT Mentor: Dr. Ryan Olson

My research interests include cognitive control, concussions/mild traumatic brain injury, faking concussion symptoms, and more broadly memory, attention, and cognition.

