
*BEA Grant for Innovation in Career and Professional Skill Development for
Psychology Graduate Students, Interns and Postdoctoral Trainees/Scholars
2021*

Department or program submitting proposal: University of Massachusetts Medical School Psychology Internship

Contact Name: Heidi Putney

Contact Phone Number: 5072767369

Contact Email: Heidi.Putney@umassmed.edu

.....

Need and Approach

UMass Professional Development Panels: Targeting Barriers to Careers for Psychology Interns

Heidi Putney, Ph.D., Jeffrey Burl, Ph.D., Danielle Rynczak, J.D., Psy.D., ABPP & Jack Terry, Ph.D.

University of Massachusetts Medical School

In 2002, the Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers (APPIC) initiated a conference aimed at establishing competencies essential in professional psychology. Identified as a core competency area, professional development emerged as integral to professional psychology training. One recommendation to contribute toward this development at the doctoral level included holding regular professional development seminars. Further, at the postdoctoral level, professional development included engaging in activities to define career trajectories. However, little has been developed to help guide Directors of Training with enhancing psychologists' professionalism.

The University of Massachusetts Medical School / Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital (UMass-WRCH) aims to develop one possible model of year-long professional development seminar series for Psychology Interns and program facilitation for Postdoctoral Psychology Residents. A pilot program was created for the 2020-2021 internship year to gauge intern satisfaction. Six virtual Professional Development Panels were created to target different pathways to the workplace while highlighting barriers individualized to the specific internship cohort (e.g., issues of diversity/discrimination, barriers to starting families, vitae development, geographical limitations). Each panel was composed of three professionals (primarily doctoral-level psychologists) from across the nation representing diverse demographics. Panels included pathways to postdoctoral positions, research/policy, academia, private practice, and public sector hospitals. The facilitator of each panel was a current postdoctoral resident of psychology allowing for the co-occurring professional development of the resident. The resident participated in panel development, connecting with panelists, and with offering supplemental didactic seminars. Feedback was solicited from the internship cohort to establish strengths and weaknesses.

UMass-WRCH aims to discuss the development, strengths, and weaknesses of this model and looks to establish an open dialogue with colleagues to determine if a national expansion of this model in collaboration with APPIC is feasible, sustainable, and/or desired using newsletters and conference presentations. With little direction on how to foster professional development during later stages of psychology training, we would like to additionally invite discussion on strategies utilized by other programs to promote this important competency and expand upon the already established seminar topics. For the 2021-2022 internship year, we hope to expand upon the current professional development seminars by inviting a wider array of diverse speakers to amplify diverse voices/perspectives, involving other internship programs to expand upon the original pilot and reach a larger population of interns, and incorporate additional research methods to appropriately evaluate the program. The ultimate goal of such a program would be to provide a monthly option for psychology interns around the country to virtually connect with professionals from diverse backgrounds and address topics of professional development.

Timeline and Personnel

The program development is currently following a three-phase process. Phase 1 (November 2020 to August 2021) included the conceptual development of the seminars while working collaboratively with the current interns to present on topics of professional interest to them. Feedback questions were added to the current didactic ratings form to directly address intern perceptions of strengths and weaknesses of each panel/topic. The postdoctoral resident was responsible for finding and connecting with the panelists for each seminar and organizing the virtual platform for all attendees. Panelists spoke on a voluntary basis and were allowed to speak informally about their journey to their career and the barriers they faced. The resident engaged in monthly supervision with the Internship Co-Director and was provided the feedback from the interns after deidentification.

Phase 2 (Spring 2021 to Fall 2021) started with a submission for presentation to the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (APA Division 2) conference in April of 2021. The presentation was accepted in June of 2021 for the October 2021 conference. As noted above, the aim of this presentation is to discuss the development, strengths, and weaknesses of this model and to establish if a national expansion of this model is feasible, sustainable, and/or desired. Additionally, we anticipate submitting a paper for the American Psychology-Law Society (APLS) monthly newsletter in late summer (August 2021) to introduce/promote the idea of the professional development seminars and invite collaboration and ideas to increase the applicability of the program to as many interns and postdoctoral residents as possible. Finally, we plan to submit a research proposal to the UMass Institutional Review Board (IRB) in the fall (September to November 2021) to formally evaluate the program and interview professionals around the country to determine necessary themes to consider in professional development program.

Phase 3 (Fall 2021 to Summer 2022) will continue with year two of the program development seminars at UMass. This will include inviting new and repeat panelists to discuss new and repeat topics related to professional development as well as feedback solicited from the interns and the panelists. We hope to have added additional internship programs to the program and plan to

discuss with APPIC the feasibility of scaling this program nationally. Personnel will include the Internship Co-Director, Jeffrey Burl, Ph.D. Dr. Burl supervised the postdoctoral resident during the 2020-2021 year and has been closely involved in the development of the program and managing the feedback system of the interns. Also involved will be the prior postdoctoral resident, Heidi Putney, Ph.D., in a consultant role. In addition to helping the new postdoctoral resident develop new seminars and connect with panelists, Dr. Putney will be the primary investigator on the research project and assist with writing and presenting responsibilities. Additionally, Danielle Rynczak, J.D., Psy.D., ABPP, currently organizes all diversity training for the internship program and collaborated during the 2020-2021 year with contacting panelists. Dr. Rynczak will continue to assist with writing responsibilities and will contribute to the qualitative methodologies required for the research project.

Funding and Support

The University of Massachusetts Medical School / Worcester Recovery Center and Hospital (with additional funding from the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health) will continue to support the clinical psychology internship including the salaries for the clinical interns, Dr. Burl, and Dr. Rynczak. The UMass postdoctoral residency in forensic psychology will continue to support the professional development program by providing dedicated time for one resident to continue contributing to the seminars. Additionally, UMass/WRCH will continue to provide the online platform capabilities as well as the statistical software necessary to conduct the research. All research review will go through the UMass IRB. Additional support may also become available as new internship programs join the professional development program and/or as APPIC becomes supportive of the initiative.

BEA funds will significantly help support the development of Phase 3 of the UMass/WRCH program development seminars. The first \$1,400 is anticipated to be used to compensate the consultant, Dr. Putney, for her time, travel, and research responsibilities throughout the 2021-2022 contractual year. Another \$2,700 is anticipated to compensate the three virtual speakers each month (for nine months) approximately \$100 per speaker for the hour and a half of their time. The program expects to increase the seminar time from one hour to an hour and a half to incorporate feedback that the speakers were not given long enough to talk about each topic. For the upcoming conference for the Society for the Teaching of Psychology in October of 2021, approximately \$650 will be used to register Dr. Burl, Dr. Rynczak, and Dr. Putney as well as to allow for the new postdoctoral resident to be registered. Five \$50 gift cards (\$250) will be used as a random draw incentive for the research study which will in turn help us to incorporate new professional development topics based on the thoughts of experts, trainers, and trainees in the field.

With the support of BEA funding during the Phase 3 of our second pilot of the UMass/WRCH Professional Development Seminars for Clinical Psychology Interns, we will be able to start to compensate our speakers, pay for a consultant, attend important conferences necessary to market the program and solicit field feedback, and conduct research to more theoretically ground the professional development topics according to the needs of the field (based on different levels of career status). We believe the data and feedback accumulated through the second year of the

program will allow for a scaled up national model of monthly, virtual professional development seminars which can be attended by clinical interns from programs across the county.

Outcomes

During Phase 1, interns were asked to give feedback regarding their satisfaction after each professional development panel. Interns were asked: 1. Were the teaching methods effective at easily conveying the information (e.g., handouts, slides, etc.), 2. Did the presentation meet the objectives as they were described by the presenter(s), 3. Were culture and diversity related topics appropriately discussed (e.g., age, race, ethnicity, orientation, etc.), 4. How would you rate the overall quality of this training, 5. How would you rate the presenter's effectiveness in their presentation, 6. Did the presenter seem well-prepared and knowledgeable about the topic, 7. Was the presenter reasonably responsive to intern participation and questions, 8. How would you rate the overall quality of the presenter, 9. Was the content and teaching appropriate for an internship-level didactic, and 10. How helpful was this topic toward your professional development? Would you recommend it be presented to next year's interns? Interns were also asked to give any comments on the presenter, the presentation, and on their general thoughts.

During Phase 3, this feedback form will be used again to measure satisfaction longitudinally and to continue soliciting ideas from interns to improve upon and grow the program. In addition, we plan to add a feedback form for the panelists to understand the value they see in the program as well as to solicit their ideas about what can change about the format and what topics could be added.

Two new surveys are also anticipated to be added to our current outcome measurement in a pre/post process during Phase 3. A modified version of the Professional Quality of Life Scale (ProQOL) Version 5 (Stamm, 2009) attends to the quality the intern feels in relation to their work as a psychologist by asking questions about both the positive (e.g., job satisfaction) and negative (e.g., burnout and secondary traumatic stress) aspects of the job. The scale is a 30-item test and scored on a five-point Likert-scale on how recently the items were experienced from never (1) to very often (5). A modified version of the Career Resources Questionnaire (CRQ; Marciniak, Hirschi, Johnston, & Haenggli, 2020) will encompass feelings of career preparedness on three dimensions including career knowledge and skills, career motivation, and career seeking activities. This scale is a 27-item test and scored on a five-point Likert-scale on how much an item applies from not at all (1) to very much (5). Interns will be given these measures in the beginning of the year and following the completion of all professional development seminars to determine any impact from the seminars. We anticipate potentially recruiting some internship programs not involved in professional development seminars to take these two surveys as well to increase the confidence in the contribution of the seminars specifically. Finally, the postdoctoral resident will be asked open ended questions about their experience with the program to determine if this has an impact on their feelings of career readiness and to solicit thoughts about possible modifications to the program.