

BEHAVIORAL²⁰²⁰ HEALTH

Cultivating New Ground

PLUS

Race, Racism, & Mental Health

Scholarship program designed to increase
diversity of mental health workforce

The SBH Summer Academy—
A Pipeline for Success



LOMA LINDA
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Behavioral Health



We all look forward to the time when we can meet again, face-to-face, with a new appreciation for the value of friends and colleagues.

From the Dean

For so many people, 2020 was one of the most difficult years ever experienced. The effects of an unprecedented pandemic and fight for racial justice brought forth critical issues that we as behavioral health professionals must and will continue to address. Now, as we usher in 2021 and undoubtedly reflect on this past year, it is my hope that we can also shift our attention to some of the good that emerged through the challenges of 2020—the strong collective voices that now stand steadfast for racial and social justice as well as the adaptive, creative generosity of spirit demonstrated by so many.

It is with this view that the current issue of the School of Behavioral Health (SBH) alumni magazine is presented. It is a tribute to the unwavering efforts and dedication of our alumni, students, faculty, and staff to serve others. To YOU, our alumni, who have in so many instances been pivotal in supporting the continuation of our students' clinical experiences, we are deeply grateful. And to our students, faculty, and staff, who have all worked tirelessly to ensure continuity of academic and clinical excellence despite complex and rapidly changing circumstances, this issue is also a celebration of YOU.

As such, as you explore each article I hope you share with me the inspiration that comes from learning how leadership in program development, scholarship, and commitments to excellence can have real impact on the lives of others. You will learn about the outstanding efforts of the Psychology faculty to secure Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA) funding to provide scholarships for doctoral level psychology trainees who have experienced economic and/or educational hardship with particular emphasis on underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities. You will also learn more about the SBH Behavioral Health Summer Academy, established to increase the number of youth and young adults from underrepresented racial and ethnic communities who are interested in pursuing professional careers in behavioral health in order to better serve our local communities, the nation, and the world. Both initiatives illustrate that the membership of the School of Behavioral Health stands firm in its commitment to antiracism and the assurance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). This commitment is further supported by the DEI student committees that have been formed in each of our departments and centrally. In the words of Maya Angelou, "Surviving is important. Thriving is elegant." SBH is committed to the thriving of all of our members.

Finally, on behalf of everyone in SBH, please know that we all look forward to the time when we can meet again, face-to-face, with a new appreciation for the value of friends and colleagues. As always, we want you to know that all of us here in the School of Behavioral Health wish all of you, your family and friends—and everyone in our communities—the best of health, safety, and joy in 2021.

Bev Buckles, Dean
School of Behavioral Health

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Mission

The mission of the School of Behavioral Health is "to provide a spiritually supportive context for teaching, clinical practice, and research innovation that pursues integrative behavioral health aimed at reducing health disparities and promoting social justice in a global context locally and globally." The mission of the School of Behavioral Health is underpinned by Loma Linda University's commitment to the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ to transform lives through whole person care.

MFT graduate named 2020-21 Behavioral Health alumnus of the year

Bertrand Moses, a 2013 Marital and Family Therapy graduate from Loma Linda University's School of Behavioral Health, was named the School's alumnus of the year for 2020-21. Moses recently entered the Atlantic Fellowship for Health Equity of George Washington University, after serving for six years as a child affairs advocate in the government of Trinidad and Tobago.

Moses was selected for the alumni honor to recognize his three career passions: servant leadership, mental health, and the protection of vulnerable groups.

When notified of his selection, Moses shared that Loma Linda's core values of compassion, wholeness and teamwork have been ongoing influences in his career.

"Those specific values transformed my outlook on life and living," Moses said. "In a world with so much suffering, the School of Behavioral Health inspired me to keep a hopeful fighting outlook."

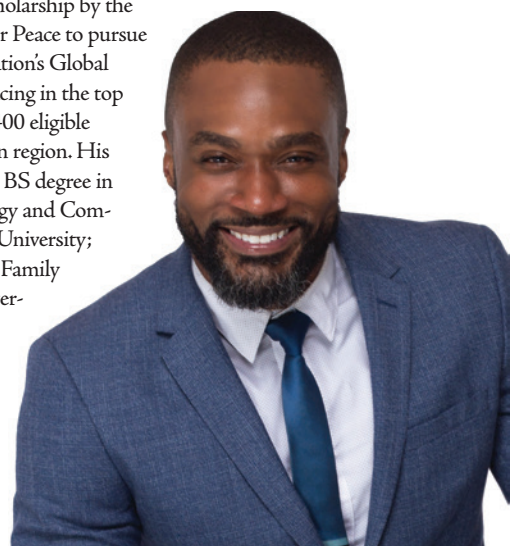
Moses has been serving as National Coordinator of Child Affairs at the Office of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago. In that role, Moses led in the development of a series of efforts to protect children and encourage respect for their rights. Moses helped:

- Develop the Caribbean region's first National Child Policy, based exclusively on child well-being with a children's rights focus;
- Create the first-ever T&T Child Rights Ambassadors program, which resulted in children educating more than 343,500 individuals on children's rights. This also resulted in

ambassadors being selected to represent 12 countries of the Eastern Caribbean Region in UNICEF's Regional Dialogue for Latin America and the Caribbean in Chile;

- Train more than 3,000 key stakeholders in areas such as children's rights and legislation, child protection, and mental health.

Earlier in 2020, Moses was selected from a pool of global candidate leaders as an Atlantic Fellow for Health Equity—a competitive program administered by George Washington University. Additionally, in 2020, he was awarded a scholarship by the United Nations' University for Peace to pursue its Centre of Executive Education's Global Leadership Diploma after placing in the top 25 applicants from a field of 400 eligible applicants from the Caribbean region. His previous education includes a BS degree in Behavioral Science (Psychology and Communications) from Andrews University; an MS degree in Marital and Family Therapy at Loma Linda University; and postgraduate study in the United Nations' Graduate Study Program at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland.



Loma Linda University Health

homecoming

Thursday, March 4 - Monday, March 8, 2021

For more information about all of this year's virtual Homecoming events visit

llu.edu/homecoming

Cultivating New Ground



The Department of Social Work and Social Ecology has a history of graduates excelling in their chosen fields and being promoted to very high positions within health and human service organizations.

Amrita Rai, MSW, LCSW, is a 2000 graduate of the Loma Linda University MSW program. She is the Clinical Director of Behavioral Health and Care Management at Inland Empire Health Plan (IEHP), the largest not-for-profit Medicare-Medicaid plan in the country. In this position, Ms. Rai provides oversight for over 250 staff supporting the Inland Empire network of behavioral health services.

Ms. Rai grew up always wanting to help those in need—people, animals, and insects alike. Family members would often tell her, “You can’t save everything,” but that never stopped her from trying.

There was the bee she tried to save from drowning in a pool, which promptly stung her when she carried it to safety. Then there were the two abandoned dogs she found wandering around her neighborhood, which she lovingly adopted into her home. Nothing was too big or small to deserve a better life.

As a high school student at Glendale Adventist Academy, Ms. Rai would spend late nights on the phone as a peer counselor, lending a listening ear to classmates in need of emotional support. “People used to call me ‘Dear Abby’ because I was the one people turned to for advice,” she said. “Sometimes I would have so much homework to do, but I just couldn’t leave someone who needed me.”

It came as no surprise that Ms. Rai pursued a social work major in college. “It aligned with who I was as a person,” she said. “I care about people feeling heard, finding their voice, and being able to overcome life’s obstacles.”

Ms. Rai earned her BSW from La Sierra University in 1999, and was one of the first students to complete the Advanced Standing one-year MSW program at LLU.

Upon graduation, Ms. Rai quickly found employment at the LLUH Behavioral Medicine Center (BMC), initially working on the children’s unit and later in adult services. After working at the BMC for 10 years, she secured a position as the Chief Executive Officer of the Riverside Hospital for Behavior Medicine. Her responsibilities there included oversight of the facility, recruiting and hiring physicians, and creating and implementing policies.

In her current role at IEHP, Ms. Rai works to influence change in systemic issues that impact social determinants of health. “IEHP’s mission is to heal and inspire the human spirit. Our behavioral health team aims to accomplish this by advocating and caring for those suffering in silence,” said Ms. Rai. “Knowing our work impacts the lives of our 1.3 million members is a profound responsibility and honor.”

Ms. Rai also co-hosts a weekly podcast called *Chat and Chai* with Dr. Gayani DeSilva, Medical Director of Behavioral Health at IEHP. The goal of their podcast is to reduce the stigma and increase understanding of how physical health affects a person’s mental health, and vice versa. The duo have covered topics ranging from depression and suicide to parenting and weight loss.

“Our *Chat and Chai* launch coincided with the entire state shutting down due to the pandemic,” said Ms. Rai. “We realized we were in a unique position to help people cope with our new reality.”

With her busy work life, Ms. Rai finds balance through taking time with her husband Carl to pursue one of her favorite

“If you have a ‘why’ that drives you, just being part of the process is humbling and rewarding enough.”

hobbies: gardening. Together, they have created a backyard stair-stepped garden of herbs, fruits, and vegetables. “It’s such a relaxing way to unwind from a busy day,” she said. “There’s nothing quite like getting your hands in the dirt and grounding yourself in nature.”

Ms. Rai hopes Loma Linda University will continue to attract high-quality students into their social work program.

“I had so many people tell me this was a thankless field, but I would say that is not true,” she says. “If you have a ‘why’ that drives you—your North Star—just being part of the process is humbling and rewarding enough.”

The School of Behavioral Health is honored and deeply grateful for Ms. Rai’s dedication to excellence and leadership in providing comprehensive integrated behavioral health care to the citizens of the Inland Empire.

Race, Racism, & Mental Health

By Marquita LaGarde, Associate Clinical Social Worker and MSW Class of 2017

COLLECTIVE TRAUMA

Collectively we have been experiencing trauma. Coronavirus has shifted us away from our norms, and the way things used to be are no more. Sitting at home beginning in March we all felt that we had a common enemy, defeating this virus and slogans like “we are in this together” truly felt like the fight was a collective fight. Then the names begin to ring out—Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor and George Floyd—and reality begins to hit the Black community again, maybe the “we” isn’t collective. Once again the Black community has to see faces and names that remind us of the intergenerational traumas experienced in America by Black bodies. These moments reminded me of the history of not just my generation, but the many generations that have come before me. A painful reminder that as much as we believed things have changed, maybe the change really has not come. How does this trauma impact me and my community?

How do we navigate moving forward and ensure that future generations don’t have to continue this fight and endure racism?

A BLACK GIRL IN AMERICA

As a Black woman in America I can recall my first experience where I felt I didn’t belong in this country and I couldn’t trust the lens that was being imparted on me because it didn’t reflect who I was in an objective light. It was in the 3rd grade and I could recall it so vividly, my teacher saw my young outspoken ways as a threat to the management of her classroom. I could recall an interaction while in class where the teacher instructed us to get some writing done. As I prepared for this writing activity, I began placing my pencil boxes on my desk. This was a habit of mine in order to feel fully prepared and focused to start my day. When I completed my writing and turned my assignment in, the teacher looked at me and said, “Are you going to continue to set your desk up like it’s some office? No one wants

to be bothered with all of those things. Your writing is too small for me to even read, how are you even done this fast?” My heart sank because these types of microaggressions can shape us before we even realize that they are happening. As a third grader who naturally was an introvert I froze, she continued to poke and probe and eventually I broke. I responded in a snarky way, it was my fight response an attempt to protect myself. After this interaction, we became sworn enemies and I was written up for non-compliance more in a single school year than I had ever been before.

When my mother arrived to school one day to discuss these write-ups and detentions the teacher’s response was, “I have never experienced a more difficult child, she thinks her desk is her office, she always has a rebuttal when I am engaging with her, why can’t she be like her cousin, ‘nice, quiet and compliant?’” Instead of getting to know me and trying to understand me she punished me for not meeting the mold she had set in her mind. She did not care to know the little girl who had just lost her father, had already moved at least five times within the last two years, and was now residing in a shared home with all of her cousins, aunts, and uncles. That little girl could have used a little compassion and understanding. Instead, these negative interactions continued for the remainder of the school year. This would begin my distrust for those in places deemed safe. The targeted interactions imparted upon a 3rd grader by an adult (in power) should have never occurred and yet this remained my experience until I left her class. It was the beginning of many other negative interactions, simply for being an expressive Black girl and later a woman.

These experiences, whether they occurred in school, work, or in my community, caused deep-rooted anger, sadness, hurt, insecurities, anxiety, and bouts of depression that I was not sure how to unpack for many years of my life. Never fully grasping why it occurred but understanding that these experiences were very real. The same feelings came rushing back when political entities group Black people in this country as monolithic. The generalization is that we are all lazy and ungrateful for what we “have” in this country. The anxiety began to build weekly from what was being portrayed on television and the feelings I had as a 3rd grader with little to no control caused sleepless nights due to racing thoughts. In this context, the protests and different names brought to the forefront, the shared experiences of injustices in all facets of life caused me to cry more than I have cried in the last year. At 31 years old, I try not to lose hope; as



a therapist, I have found ways to manage my emotions and speak to my own therapist about my traumas. My grief isn't just for me, it's for the next generation that comes after me, it's for my people currently in the fight.

BLACK IN AMERICA

Being Black in America has been a traumatic experience for over 400 years. Police brutality, Black maternal mortality, work discrimination, economic and education inequality, and the criminal justice system are just a few ways and spaces where Black Americans experience trauma. Whether it's seeing another Black body lay lifeless in the streets, being told you aren't beautiful or desirable based on the natural features you were born with, being paid less and not given the proper tools to obtain and actualize the American dream, or losing your freedom in the criminal justice system for doing something your White counterparts would have been given grace. Forced to labor for a country that only saw you as 3/5ths of a human, never fully giving you access to the dreams of the founding fathers. Finding ways to oppress Black bodies through over policing and criminalizing Black culture and communities in ways never seen in White communities.

These experiences become a collective trauma imparted onto our community and the allies that stand with us who understand the serious impact race and racism have on our ability to function and navigate in this country. These experiences do not begin and end with police encounters and brutality. Racism and the values of those who oppress Black communities hold spaces in all facets of life. They are business owners, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and politicians. We are under-represented in positive spaces and over-represented

in negative spaces due to the deeply rooted systemic racism that this country was built on and the values tightly held by those who hold the power. Racism on an individual level does harm, but it is the systemic racism that has a generational impact on how we are able to thrive in this country.

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

Intergenerational trauma can negatively impact families as a result of unresolved emotions and thoughts about a traumatic event. Intergenerational trauma is the understanding that even though we all have not experienced a trauma, in the case of the Black community slavery, we continue to experience the effects of that trauma. History shows that the trauma did not end with slavery and our freedom did not come with the 13th Amendment. It continued with the trauma of the civil rights movement, being hosed and attacked by dogs. The fight continued into the 80s and 90s with the war on drugs. These generational events continue to plague and haunt the Black community today. The effects are seen in the prisons and rapped about in the songs that we all listen to. Fighting for continued freedom and never being able to actualize that freedom. "And if this bottle could talk *gulping* I cry myself to sleep" – Kendrick Lamar (2015). It all resulted in us building a community on pain, and due to the history and personal experiences we have with systems, some seek support with the church or engage in unhealthy coping strategies. Escaping from problems by suppressing them with substances, violence, or some form of spiritual connection. This is the harm being caused. To a resilient community it over time can destroy from the inside out. For many, religion is the escape needed in order to survive the daily racism and trauma experienced.

A CALL TO ACTION

Where do we belong in this change process as professionals? The social work profession has values that hold us accountable in times like this. The main three relevant to this are service, social justice, and dignity and worth of a person. Being of service to the Black community is a great place to start. As I have highlighted throughout this, the trauma is generational and deep-seated, and the Black community needs strong and understanding professionals to engage them from a place of humility and understanding while utilizing a humanistic approach. We are not expecting you to know everything, but we do value relationships and respect for our culture. Social justice does not just involve public protest. It is important that we challenge social injustices in the places we navigate on a daily basis, whether this is in your church or on your job. In order to address racism, the Black community needs allies who understand the harm racism causes. It needs allies to speak out against injustices and hold space for those who have experienced these injustices. Finally, dignity and worth of a person means being willing to truly seeing us, in our Blackness, and getting to know us as individuals and our cultural diversity. Embracing those differences and understanding that our differences are what makes this country beautiful.

I want to challenge schools and employers to improve their diversity by recruiting and hiring persons of color in the mental/behavioral health field. Representation matters and if we are truly in a space of ending racism and valuing Black lives, that begins by including Black lives fully in your communities. This is the beginning step to repairing the mistrust by the Black community when it comes to mental health. Seeing a face like theirs can begin the discussion about the importance of mental health and healing mentally. "Daring leaders who live into their values are never silent about hard things." -Brené Brown

HOW TO HEAL

The healing process begins with us, accepting these challenges and using our privilege to make the changes we want to see. Not dismissing the experiences of systemic racism or centering oneself in these interactions, believing that your privilege is non-existent, when in fact your privilege has assisted in you avoiding oppression solely based on the color of your skin. Acknowledge that and take up the charge for progress. If we are in this together, we have to be in this together from all facets of experiences in this chase for the American dream. Zora Neale Hurston stated, "If you are silent about your pain, they will kill you and say you enjoyed it." Now that you have heard the call to action, take the necessary steps towards change. Hear our voices, understand our concerns, and stand beside us and fight for a better future.

For more information about Black Lives Matter and to learn how to support their social justice efforts, visit blmie.org.

Follow Marquita's @BLKMHC account on Instagram to engage in the conversation about Black values, strength, and concerns from the lens of a mental health professional utilizing strategies and topics to begin the healing process.

Navigating Neuropsychology



Recognizing that the field of neuropsychology has had limited opportunities for professionals to share information and develop new concepts, a School of Behavioral Health alumnus co-hosts a twice-monthly podcast discussing the field's issues and opportunities.

Launched in September 2018 with three episodes, Navigating Neuropsychology ("NavNeuro" for short) features hosts Dr. John Bellone (SBH '16) and colleague Dr. Ryan Van Patten interviewing experts in a particular topic area within neuropsychology. An avid podcast listener over the years, Dr. Bellone had often lamented that he couldn't find a neuropsychology-specific podcast.

"Podcasts are the perfect medium for delivering nuanced conversations to a broad audience, which I felt the field was lacking," Bellone said. While completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Brown University, Dr. Bellone met Dr. Van Patten. One day Dr. Van Patten commented about how several other professions have their own podcast and that neuropsychology should have one, too.

"That re-ignited my interest," Dr. Bellone said. "After thinking about it for a few days, I approached Ryan and said, 'Why don't we just create a neuropsychology podcast ourselves!?' Luckily, he was fully on board, and that was the start of this endeavor."

From the three-episode launch, NavNeuro's library has reached 60 episodes, with new programs released on the 1st and 15th of each month. Dr. Bellone says NavNeuro's programming has three primary objectives:

1. Provide interesting, relevant, and easily-accessible information for students and professionals in neuropsychology, as well as anyone who is interested in brain-behavior relationships.
2. Begin a process of unification on important areas of debate within neuropsychology, while also encouraging the expression of diverse, creative ideas and opinions.
3. Act as an outlet for innovative ideas and breaking news in the field, to allow listeners to stay abreast of current scientific and professional developments in neuropsychology.

Dr. Bellone says the podcast will continue as long as people continue to listen. "There are hundreds of topic areas that are ripe for discussion, so I don't anticipate ever running out of ideas," he said.

Dr. Bellone and Dr. Van Patten have partnered with the International Neuropsychological Society (INS), and NavNeuro episodes are now available for APA-accredited Continuing Education credit. The two men have also just published a book titled *Becoming a Neuropsychologist*, which is now available for purchase from Springer. The book provides advice and guidance to students interested in pursuing a career in neuropsychology.

While Dr. Bellone had an interest in studying philosophy since high school, a class in biopsychology during his undergraduate program at California State University Fullerton provided the impetus for a change in his career path.

"That class lit a spark in me," Dr. Bellone said. "The professor focused on the philosophical aspects of neuroscience, such as how little we understand about consciousness. The prospect that I could continue contemplating these deep philosophical questions while also studying the brain, contributing to scientific knowledge, making a profound impact in people's lives, and earning a decent salary while doing it... neuropsychology was the perfect blend of everything I wanted in a career."

Dr. Bellone enrolled in the Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health, ultimately earning his master's and doctoral degrees in clinical psychology, with a concentration in neuropsychology.

"I had heard great things about the psychology program," Dr. Bellone said. "I also discovered that Dr. Rich Hartman had a behavioral neuroscience lab with ongoing research that I found fascinating. I also liked LLU's emphasis on wellness." It didn't hurt that Loma Linda was close to his family and girlfriend (now wife).

Dr. Bellone's memories of LLU include international research trips, working with interesting patients, and game nights with several close friends in the program. He also found valuable inspiration from two faculty members.

"I am forever grateful to my two main mentors, Dr. Rich Hartman (research) and Dr. Travis Fogel (clinical)," Dr. Bellone said. "They laid the foundation that would allow me to build my career, and solidified my passion for both science and clinical practice."

Dr. Bellone recently obtained board certification in clinical neuropsychology, and his clinical practice is located in Fullerton, California. Dr. Bellone's wife, Raquel Bellone, works with families facing homelessness as part of a county-funded program. The couple has a nine-month-old daughter.

Dr. Bellone encourages anyone interested in learning about the brain, contributing to scientific understanding, and making a direct impact in people's lives to consider pursuing a career in neuropsychology. And he says Loma Linda University is a great place to get started on that path.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my time at SBH and have fond memories, relationships, and excellent scientific and clinical training as a result."

Dr. Bellone (far left)
and Dr. Van Patten





Child Life grad teaching EMTs ways to support children in emergencies

When a child experiences an injury or illness that requires an ambulance ride to a hospital, it can be a traumatic event. Often, pre-hospital providers such as paramedics and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) have minimal knowledge of traumatic stress in children. They haven't been trained in utilizing coping techniques or the provision of psychosocial care to pediatric patients and their families.

Heather Saenz, a child life specialist graduate from the School of Behavioral Health, is working to change this. In 2001, she began her journey as an EMT at American Medical Response (AMR) in Redlands, the primary Emergency Medical Service system in Loma Linda, California and the surrounding cities. She then advanced her clinical skills by working for Loma Linda University Health in outpatient urgent care as a patient care assistant before returning to her role as an EMT in critical care transport. During this time, Heather was hired to teach EMT skills classes at Crafton Hills College.

Her passion for working with children and their families led her to the Child Life Specialist MS program. Upon completing her degree, Heather was hired as a per diem Child Life Specialist at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital (LLUCH).

Here, she naturally gravitated to the Emergency Department.

Her background in emergency medical services led to Heather becoming an adjunct faculty member at Crafton Hills College, Victor Valley College, and College of the Desert, teaching classes of up to 40 EMTs and EMRs (Emergency Medical Responders). She also provides EMT and EMR training to high school students in Apple Valley High School and Oak Hills High School.

"As children," Heather says, "we get excited when we see a fire truck, ambulance, or police car. However, that same vehicle creates a sense of fear and anxiety when it responds to an emergency involving one of their family members or themselves. EMS personnel are the first ones to interact with pediatric patients in these anxiety-provoking situations. As an EMT, Child Life Specialist, and EMS instructor, I feel it is very important to give responders the skills to reduce the anxiety children feel during these unfamiliar and very scary situations."

Training EMS students encompasses using child life assessment to help children understand what is happening to them. These techniques include explaining that the IV is a "little straw" or that a tourniquet may "feel

tight." EMS students are also taught to use distraction techniques, such as showing the child a video on a phone or talking about their favorite cartoon or video game.

"Rapport-building is essential when working with children in a stressful situation," says Heather. She also promotes the use of comfort holds so that children do not have to be restrained. This gives caregivers an active role in their child's care by having them sit on their parent's lap while hugging them during a procedure.

Because of the number of challenges that can compromise the mental health and well-being of EMS providers, Heather also addresses the topics of self-care and PTSD. Additionally, she is creating a death/dying resource manual for EMS providers to assist families when a death occurs at home or in the field.

"Heather's work in EMS is innovative and unique. She is bridging the professions of child life and EMS, with the goal of promoting psychosocial care for pediatric patients and their families," says Michelle Minyard-Widmann, Child Life Specialist MS program director. "When Heather started the program, we knew she had something different to bring to the field and we're excited to see where this leads her."

Alumni couple help families build positive bonds

Joshua and Deborah Dambara co-own “Nurture: Child and Family Therapy” in Kanab, Utah, near Zion National Park. Both are 2011 graduates of the School of Behavioral Health’s Marital and Family Therapy MS program. Through their work they have committed to a mission of creating connections and supporting acceptance and safety within parent-child relationships.

Along with the private services provided through their Nurture practice, Joshua and Deborah also provide therapy services for students (preschool to high school) from the Kane County School District.

A belief that relationships form a key part of life’s core, combined with a passion for helping children and parents, drew Deborah to the marital and family therapy profession.

“What makes life great for me is creating love and having a true sense of belonging in the world,” Deborah said. “There is something so magical about a child’s ability to be present and authentic. I never cease to feel inspired working with children and seeing their resilience in the face of difficult life circumstances.”

Likewise, Joshua enjoys being a part of each of his clients’ growth journeys. “I feel a sense of connectedness when I work with people’s inner thoughts and experience,” he said. “I am interested in how people view the world.”

Deborah and Joshua accomplish much of their work through implementing the Gestalt approach to therapy, which offers an experiential and process-based way of working with individuals—including Gestalt play therapy interventions when working with younger children.

The couple can point to data demonstrating how their efforts with the Kane County school children have enhanced the way the state of Utah views the relationship between mental health services and school systems. “Our methods have highlighted the importance of providing mental health services for students and have subsequently resulted in an increased call to action by Utah’s school districts and the state legislature,” Joshua said.

Coordinating mental health services within a school setting is not without challenges. Much effort goes toward coordinating treatment recommendations for the children, parents, and teachers they work with. “Our goal is that the people of Utah receive the highest level of



therapy,” Deborah said. “I feel proud of the services we provide.”

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting transitions to online education have impacted the Dambaras’ approaches as well.

“Since school closures and social distancing began, we have converted our practice to 100% telehealth services during this time,” Deborah said. “This was a big shift as most of our services had been offered in person up until that point. We feel our understanding of technology was a huge advantage to us in being able to adapt quickly.”

“The benefits of using technology to reach clients are limitless,” Joshua added. “From fun digital backgrounds, funny voices, in-app art and games as well as easy accessibility to your therapist at the touch of a button, we see telehealth services as the future of therapy.”

The couple chose to study at the School of Behavioral Health because of its incredible reputation and the positive atmosphere surrounding the professors and students. Deborah and Joshua concur that completing their MFT MS degrees at LLU has provided them with a strong foundation that continues to support their professional choices.

“I am incredibly grateful to Dr. Mary Moline, director of the MFT MS program, for her passion to support students to find the modality that best fits each of us,” Deborah said. “There was nothing more valuable in that program than the clinical support we received in searching for our epistemological approach to therapy. Everything in my career has been guided by my pursuit of specializing in Gestalt therapy.”

“LLU’s ethical standards have been a guiding influence in my career,” Joshua added. “A focus on respecting the people we serve will always be with me on my journey.”

That journey took this married couple to Kanab, Utah, where they found a place that allowed them to have much time with their three children—Henry, Scarlet, and Vivien. Their future goals include expanding their online private services to support citizens throughout Utah. Deborah is also writing a book on parenting.

“My grandfather taught me to *leave things better than how you found them*. This has been my driving personal belief. It is my mission to be a positive influence in whatever we are involved in.”

“LLU’s ethical standards have been a guiding influence in my career,” Joshua added. “A focus on respecting the people we service will always be with me on my journey.”





PHOTO BY NATAN VIGNA

Finding One's Passion to Serve

Soon-to-be alumna Heather Jones has been on a path to realizing her practice specialization for the last 16 years. Concurrently while completing the Doctor of Marital and Family Therapy (DMFT) degree, Heather developed the Guiding Light program to address the needs of transitioning foster youth. Now in its first year of service, the Guiding Light program is provided through the Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS) office at Mt. San Jacinto College (MSJC).

Heather's passion to support the needs of foster youth began when she was 18. While completing her bachelor's degree in Sociology at Holy Names College in Oakland, she volunteered to serve as a mentor for the Peer Mentor Program, supporting foster youth living in the Bay Area. Heather recalls that when she was in high school she knew a number of kids who were in foster care, but this first volunteer experience was the starting point of her journey to better understand and address the needs of foster youth. Subsequently, this initial experience led to an internship at a group home in Southern California. Heather says that on the first day of her internship she realized the teens needed something more than what was being provided. She shared her concerns with the program director and was told to start working with the teens in the way she thought they needed. Her approach was to work on building relationships with the youth. Soon it was clear that Heather's approach was working and that the teens were listening to and engaging with her in ways that were different from their interactions with other group home staff. Heather attributes part of the difference in how she related to the teens to her age, which was much

closer in years than that of the other staff, as well as to her educational background. That said, she is quick to point out that the real difference in the kids' response to her was clearly due to using a different approach to relationship-building and communication.

Following the completion of her undergraduate education, Heather continued to work at this same group home, later becoming the Intake Coordinator and then the Assistant Administrator. Realizing she needed to continue her education, Heather was accepted in the Master of Education (MEd) in Counseling and Guidance program at Howard University in Washington D.C. Once in her master's program she couldn't shake the idea that foster youth would not have the same experience as other students pursuing college education. It was then that Heather began to see the benefit of combining an expertise in education and counseling with her passion to serve foster youth. In 2015, after completing her MEd and gaining work experience in the field of education, Heather returned to California and enrolled in the DMFT program at LLU. Heather recalls recognizing that the knowledge and skills she would gain through the DMFT program would help her achieve her commitment to serve foster youth.

After her first year in the DMFT program, Heather chose to take a brief leave of absence. It was during this time in 2016 that she began working at MSJC in the EOPS office. When Heather began working with the EOPS program, there were no campus services specific to foster youth, though MSJC was connected with the California foster youth college pathway programs. As such, one of her first questions was to ask if MSJC would be starting additional programs to serve current and former foster youth. There was positive support for this idea, along with recognition that the foster youth enrolled at MSJC likely needed more services—and that there were may be unidentified foster youth attending MSJC. Subsequently, from 2016 through 2019, Heather and her supervisor Leslie Salas, Director of EOPS, worked tirelessly to see if they had the data that would support starting a program at MSJC, and began working on several proposals. In 2019, MSJC implemented an equity plan that included the need to provide further support for foster youth. The proposal that Heather and her supervisor had developed was subsequently approved, and funding was provided to hire two counselors to implement the new program—the Guiding Light program for foster youth.

The name Guiding Light came about with the help of classmates in one of Heather's first year DMFT classes. It was felt that the shining beacon atop a lighthouse, known for guiding travelers to safe haven, was symbolic of the strength, hope, and needs of foster youth struggling to successfully transition to adulthood and independence.

Implementation of the Guiding Light program began in the Spring of 2020. Working with Heather to implement the program were Leslie Salas (the EOPS Director at the that time), and Gerardo Ortiz Cardenas (a fellow EOPS Counselor with a robust background in working foster youth).

To get started, Heather and team developed an implementation strategy that focused on creating a liaison program linking MSJC with campus and community-based resources and other social services that could assist their foster youth students. The focus was also to be as inclusive as possible, encompassing foster youth transitioning out of foster care, participating in an extended foster care program, or who had already transitioned out of foster care. This approach built on the residential model of foster care and emphasized connecting with both current and former foster youth, all of whom need resources and services to support their successful transition out of the foster care system. According to Heather, "Foster youth often need additional support to help them slowly transition into and through college systems and prepare for their next life phase, which could be employment or further education." Heather pointed out that by first focusing on building these community relationships, the Guiding Light staff were able to get a better sense of how agencies understood the needs of foster youth, simultaneously observe the genuine passion of MSJC to serve these youth, and assist MSJC to identify ways that the college could support its students' identified needs. "Building these relationships was also important so that when a student needed assistance, the connections were already established and support could be provided as quickly and smoothly as possible."

Heather has pointed out that the implementation phase, which continued through the spring and summer of 2020, was comprehensive and involved every conceivable aspect of starting a new program. However, she was quick to mention that this intense effort resulted in the Guiding Light program reviewing the applications of 500 students between January 27 and October 8, 2020—and successfully enrolling 120 students beginning in the Fall 2020 term.

Now in full operation, Guiding Light

provides services above and beyond those provided by MSJC and the EOPS program. Foster youth are eligible to receive services regardless of days in foster care, and no matter how old they were when they first entered foster care. Heather has noted that, in addition to connecting students to services through Guiding Light, the EOPS office supports students with book grants and covers any fees (e.g., enrollment, health services and transportation) not covered by the California Promise program (which covers tuition only). Once students are back on campus (after the current COVID-19 restrictions have lifted), parking permit fees and a range of other services will also be provided. Heather points out that the virtual learning environment is not without challenges for foster youth. She is trying to be creative and innovative in this new situation to support everything from technology and internet needs to challenges with food security through hot meals from local restaurants, groceries from food pantries, rent, utilities, and whatever emergency needs come up. Heather is clear that the sum total of these efforts relies on the collaborative relationships built during the program implementation phase—relationships with other organizations such as John Burton Advocates for Youth, Together We Rise, Foster Nation's Meal Nation program, Oak Grove, Riverside County Office of Education, and many other local agencies that are effectively providing tangible services and much-needed support.

As Heather now looks to complete her DMFT project she may consider developing an extension or modification of the Guiding Light program—possibly under a different name. She also has additional goals for the Guiding Light program, which include seeing the program become institutionalized and used as a model for other community colleges. "There is more that can be done to bring foster youth programs together through systematic collaboration," she said.

When asked what she wants others to understand if they are interested in working with foster youth Heather said, "Foster youth are resilient and persistent and some of the most amazing human beings you will ever meet. Many have greater insight than most people who have done self-care and self-development work. It is difficult for these youth to find their way and some continue to deal with trauma. Foster youth do have special needs and it is essential that professionals work to understand those needs. For many foster youth there is a lot of mistrust in the system so it can be difficult for them to be willing to engage in

"The DMFT program can leverage wonderful opportunities for them if they are willing to take as much away from every experience as they can."

behavioral health services. It is important to remember that they can spot authenticity, so be professional but also be vulnerable and transparent—your genuine self."

Heather also wants current and future DMFT students to know that everything she has done and is doing is because of the LLU DMFT program, which has given her the knowledge and skills to successfully write program proposals and grants, engage in program development, implementation, and evaluation, and create strong and sustainable professional networks. "Don't take any class for granted. The classes are résumé builders. The classes are personal-professional development builders. The DMFT program can leverage wonderful opportunities for them if they are willing to take as much away from every experience as they can."

And what about after graduation? Heather is now the Interim Director of the MSJC EOPS/CARE program, which also includes overseeing the Guiding Light and the Dreamers program. Heather's passion to serve at-risk youth through diversity, equity, and inclusion opportunities and programs like Dreamers and Guiding Light is unwavering. She will continue to push forward agendas that create truly equitable programs for students. "As an African-American woman, who was born and raised on the west side of San Bernardino, I want to be the representation for others to see that they can be empowered, and know that if I could do it they can do it too."

Heather has two sons and a nephew who have experienced the foster care system. They continue to help her understand the depth and true needs of the population and sustain her motivation to serve. Regardless of what the future holds, Heather says she wants to continue to be a thermostat to effect change for her children and generations to come.



Scholarship program designed to increase diversity of behavioral health workforce

School of Behavioral Health receives HHS grant to provide financial aid to up to 42 doctoral students

Loma Linda University's School of Behavioral Health will be distributing \$2.97 million in scholarship funds to students in the Department of Psychology during the coming five years, following receipt of a grant award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The grant program originated in the HHS's Health Resources and Services Administration Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students program. The grant will be overseen by Bridgette Peteet, PhD, principal investigator and Associate Professor of Psychology, and Patricia Flynn, PhD, co-principal investigator and Assistant Professor of Psychology and Preventive Medicine.

The grants can be used to cover tuition, fees, books, and living expenses.

This grant will provide financial assistance to 42 doctoral-level psychology students whose backgrounds include economic or educational hardship. The HHS program emphasizes support for underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and is designed to increase the diversity of the workforce in the behavioral health professions.

"Our goal is for students in this program to commit to improving the distribution, diversity, and competency of the primary care psychology workforce in the medically underserved region of San Bernardino County," said Beverly Buckles, DSW, Dean of the School of Behavioral Health.

The Primary Care Psychology Pipeline Program (4P) will provide students up to \$30,000 per year (\$90,000 over three years) to eligible students who demonstrate a commitment to the grant's mission of addressing the mental health needs of patients in medically underserved communities. The grants can be used to cover tuition, fees, books, and living expenses. Students began receiving these funds in the Fall of 2020.

Seeking to increase the number of potential qualified grant recipients, the Department of Psychology has begun to cultivate a psychology pipeline with sister Seventh-day Adventist institutions Oakwood University and the Adventist University of the Antilles. Other Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic-Serving Institutions are also being notified of the program in an effort to diversify the pool of aspiring primary care psychologists.

Students who have been admitted into one of the Loma Linda University clinical psychology doctoral programs (PhD or PsyD) are eligible to apply for these scholarships.



More information on the program, including additional eligibility requirements, is available on the Psychology Department website.

<https://behavioralhealth.llu.edu/academics/psychology/>



Sleep plays key role in adolescents' mental health

SBH professor studying impact of sleep on behavioral, emotional, social, and physical health

Temporary sleep disruptions in children are often overlooked or seen as a normal part of development. But research being done at the School of Behavioral Health is examining the impact of poor sleep on children and adolescents' mental health development.

Tori Van Dyk, PhD, Assistant Professor of Psychology, became interested in the impact of sleep on mental and physical health in youth when she realized the prevalence of sleep problems in younger people. Her work as a pediatric health psychologist focuses on prevention and early intervention of behavioral, emotional, and physical health issues youth have.

"Nearly everyone has experienced a night of short or disrupted sleep and have felt the ways in which it impacts your mood, thinking, and feelings of wellness," Dr. Van Dyk says. "Promoting healthy behaviors, including good sleep, sets children up for a better trajectory in terms of mental and physical health."

As author or co-author of more than 20 research studies on sleep in young people, Dr. Van Dyk says sleep problems in youth are often connected to mental and physical health problems.

"We've established that poor sleep is causally related to the worsening of mood, behavior, and health," Dr. Van Dyk says. "This suggests that if we optimize sleep in youth, we'll see benefits across other areas of functioning."

Dr. Van Dyk partners with the Loma Linda University Health Sleep Center to examine the impact of sleep on behavioral, emotional, social, and physical health functioning in youth who have been referred for overnight sleep studies. She has also begun collaborating with two Department of Psychology faculty who specialize in researching youth with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Along with Drs.

Cameron Neece and Aarti Nair, Dr. Van Dyk is seeking to develop a better understanding of sleep in youth with ASD and how child sleep impacts the whole family.

Dr. Van Dyk's research is enhanced by research partnerships established across campus. Her collaboration with Dr. Sunitha Nune in the Pediatric Sleep Clinic has led to the establishment of an integrated pediatric sleep clinic that includes sleep medicine (Dr. Nune) working alongside psychology trainees to optimize sleep in youth.

"It's been a fruitful collaboration in regard to research but also in terms of improving patient care and student training," Dr. Van Dyk says.

Involving doctoral students in her research is an important priority for Dr. Van Dyk.

"Research mentorship is truly a joy and one of my favorite parts of what I do," Dr. Van Dyk says. "I approach my students as 'junior colleagues' and trust that their ideas and intuition are worth exploring. As a result, they have informed my work and produced quality projects." At a recent Western Psychological Association conference, Dr. Van Dyk's team presented five student-led posters with involvement from at least 10 current students.

Dr. Van Dyk says Loma Linda University Health's whole person care approach was an important factor in her choosing to join the School of Behavioral Health's faculty.

"I have a strong belief that it's impossible, or at least incomplete, to consider only one part of a person," Dr. Van Dyk says. "My research interests really lie at the intersection between mental and physical health in youth. I want to learn more about how one aspect of health, sleep, can act as a protective (when optimized) or risk (when disrupted) factor for other aspects of health and wellness."



SBH shares resiliency skills in Sierra Leone

International Behavioral Health Trauma Team responds to request for return visit

Loma Linda University's International Behavioral Health Trauma Team (IBHTT) spent five weeks in 2019, during multiple visits to Sierra Leone, teaching local teachers and parents techniques to improve their community's mental health and reduce stress through the Community Resiliency Model®.

Four years earlier, in response to the Ebola epidemic in Sierra Leone, the Trauma Team in collaboration with the Adventist Health System (AHS) Waterloo Hospital and the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA), initiated services to provide behavioral health interventions to the citizens of Waterloo. That epidemic, coming on the heels of a long civil war, significantly affected the mental wellbeing of Sierra Leone's population.

During this first trip, Team members had taught community resilience techniques to 40 health workers and community members. This trip was also the beginning of a research collaborative with AHS, as data from participants demonstrated significant improvements in depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorders. Six months later, Trauma Team members returned to Sierra Leone and taught 22 of the group how to teach community resilience techniques within their communities. To promote still further capacity-building and sustainability, a third trip supported 15 members of the Waterloo team to provide community seminars in CRM, with the Waterloo team leading out in the training while supported by the Trauma Team. Data demonstrated that the Waterloo team was as effective in providing training in CRM as the master trainers from the Trauma Team.

Excitement from the results of the third training event empowered the Waterloo team to request additional assistance, which allowed them to expand the use of the Community Resiliency Model® to help support other issues affecting their country—specifically issues affecting children and families. This request was made in part because Sierra Leone has only a handful of trained psychiatrists and other mental health professionals, and in part because CRM was experienced as far less stigmatizing than traditional mental health interventions. The Trauma Team gladly responded and set out to develop an approach that would support the needs of the Waterloo team and also provide opportunities to further research and doc-

ument the effectiveness of the Community Resiliency Model®.

Subsequently, to address the issues of children and families, additional members of the Trauma Team joined the efforts in Sierra Leone. Zephon Lister, PhD, Associate Professor of Counseling and Family Sciences, with specialization in marriage and family therapy and integrated behavioral health, and Kim Freeman, PhD, Professor of Social Work and Social Ecology, a pediatric psychologist and social worker, led out in the next phase of the collaboration.

Dr. Lister, who has had a lifelong interest in international service and research, has also had a passion to integrate behavioral health into primary care services. These interests were intensified several years earlier when a colleague working in a Middle East refugee camp shared the positive impact that resulted from a small team of mental health professionals teaching primary care personnel about the importance of addressing trauma, anxiety, and depression among camp residents. Medical teams in these environments are typically stretched thin, seeing as many as 100 patients per day, often having only five minutes or less to spend with each patient. This conversation inspired Dr. Lister to undertake five years of researching methods for the integration of behavioral health into difficult low resource situations. "With so little time it's very difficult to address the mental health needs of patients," Dr. Lister said. "As my colleague and I talked about her experience, we realized that we had to think differently about mental health and its implementation in low resource settings."

Dr. Lister's work in Sierra Leone was also affected by a trip to Samoa with the International Behavioral Health Trauma Team where the Community Resiliency Model® was used to support identified community needs. "While in Samoa I saw the amazing effect that CRM had on both the providers and those they taught," Dr. Lister said. "It was quick, scalable, and transferrable—I was sold! When I returned from Samoa, I was excited and eager to conduct research on the use of CRM to support the needs of low-resourced environments."

With over 20 years of experience in working with high-risk children, Dr. Freeman has spent the last 12 years working with children from many low-resourced international settings. Some of the most impacted areas included Haiti following the 2010 earthquake, Ivory Coast in 2012 following civil war, and Dominica in



2015 following severe flooding. Realizing the logistical and cultural limitations of providing direct services within many of these countries, Dr. Freeman has witnessed first-hand the benefits of CRM and its adaptability to children. As a result, she has worked closely with Elaine Karas, the developer of CRM, and others to adapt the CRM wellness skills to children. By using CRM in this way, Dr. Freeman said, both parents and children can easily help

each other cope with distress and trauma in a manner that restores balance to their nervous system and promotes a sense of wellbeing. In this regard Dr. Freeman states, “I see CRM as a critical program in the days and months following a traumatic event, as often children’s mental health needs are pushed aside, misinterpreted as behavioral problems, or completely ignored,” said Dr. Freeman. “By having parents and children work together with a simple but highly effective shared set of coping skills, we promote wellbeing within the family.”

When given the opportunity to expand the previous work done in Sierra Leone to children and families, Dr. Freeman was immediately on board and excited to help in conducting the research. Dr. Freeman said, “If we can help increase capacity in low-resourced countries by training individuals to promote wellness within their own communities—including children and families—then we have truly contributed to the development of something sustainable and lasting,” said Dr. Freeman. “Further, by conducting research, we will be able to determine the effectiveness of this approach and expand as appropriate.”

While Drs. Lister and Freeman were not part of the initial Sierra Leone visits, both were eager to support the continuation of efforts and use their joined expertise to modify CRM to support the training of teachers, parents, and students at the primary school level. After recruiting 24 teachers and nearly 500 fifth-grade students and their parents from a school in Waterloo, Drs. Lister and Freeman supported the Waterloo team to first train the teachers before expanding their efforts to the students and parents.

Utilizing Families, Schools, and Community Engaged Together (FASCET)

A Community Resiliency Model® (CRM) Based Family Resiliency Program, the five-week training sought to provide techniques to support quality of life, improved mental health, and reduced self-reported stress throughout the grade school setting. Outcomes measured included teacher burnout and job satisfaction, as well as various measures of family functioning, such as family cohesion, communication, and parental stress.

The core group of 24 teachers trained in Waterloo in 2019 are continuing to train others to expand the program. This scaling up of the FASCET program is continuing to provide research opportunities and data collection.

“We don’t know what we will find yet,” Dr. Lister said. “But we are optimistic that we might have found that the FASCET program can be one piece of the puzzle for helping to scale up mental health services in low-resourced settings in global contexts.”

The SBH Summer Academy—a Pipeline for Success

Over the last decade the School of Behavioral Health (SBH) has emphasized strengthening its public academic partnerships, with particular focus on the goal of increasing the number of students of color, and those from educationally and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, to pursue professional careers in public behavioral health services.

In 2019, SBH intensified its efforts toward this goal and developed a pipeline program with the support of Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) funding through the Office of Statewide Planning and Development (OSP-HD). This pipeline program provided 25 young adults from Southern California, who met the diversity and other application criteria, with \$1000 stipends each to attend a two-week intensive training program. This training was provided by SBH with the support of the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health, the Riverside County Department of Mental Health, as well as several other local behavioral health agencies and

providers. Program content included shadowing of behavioral health experts coupled with seminars on behavioral health content, including: interventions for depression and anxiety; suicide prevention and intervention; substance use; gangs; recovery; stress management; trauma; sleep disorders; play therapy; wellness and resiliency techniques. By the end of the pipeline program, participants were also certified in Mental Health First Aid, and the beginning skills used in the Community Resiliency Model®.

As part of receiving the OSPHD/MHSA pipeline grant, SBH also had to demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. To honor this commitment, the school transitioned the pipeline program to become the Behavioral Health Summer Academy (BHSA). Focused on the same goal of increasing the diversity of future professionals pursuing careers in behavioral health, 13 recent high school graduates enrolled in a program similar to the original pipeline program (albeit 100% online due to COVID-19). Students in the BHSA received

a tuition waiver to enroll in a 2-unit undergraduate course (PSYC 204 Introduction to Behavioral Health), a course which meets the requirements for transfer to the university or college of their choice as elective credit.

The content of the BHSA was supported primarily by SBH faculty from each department, doctoral students completing degrees in clinical psychology, and community leaders in behavioral health. At the completion of the BHSA, students voiced their great appreciation for all of the wonderful content, dialogue, and activities that each instructor provided. Notably, many of the students mentioned that the information provided through the BHSA not only confirmed their professional goals, but also helped them personally—in surprising and unexpected ways.

Advertisement for the next BHSA will begin early next spring with the goal of supporting even more students with the opportunity to explore behavioral health as a life-long career.



Class of 2020

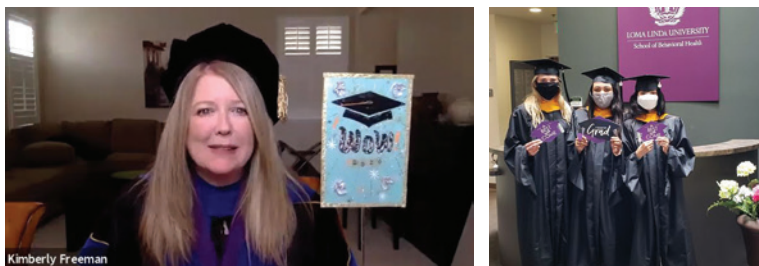
By Adam Aréchiga



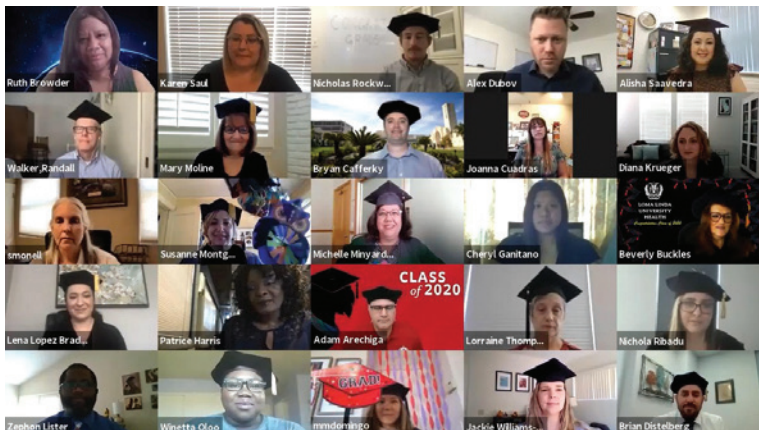
Department of
Psychology



Department of
Social Work
and Social
Ecology



Department of
Counseling
and Family
Sciences



To say that 2020 has been a rough ride does not even begin to acknowledge all that has happened around the world, and here at home in the United States. I had just returned from a Students for International Mission Service (SIMS) scouting trip to Samoa when COVID-19 brought our lives to a halt. Since then we have experienced racial strife across the country and catastrophic forest fires here in the west. The good news? We are all *resilient*!

After coming to terms with toilet paper shortages, we quickly started to adjust to life online. Faculty and students began adjusting to online classes, while students already online gave a big sigh of relief as they realized their steep learning curve was already over. Those of us with clinical practices were quickly oriented to telehealth.

As the academic year came to an end, it became apparent that there would be no in-person graduation weekend festivities. After many weeks of discarding plan after plan as we adapted to the pandemic, the School of Behavioral Health held its first online Zoom graduation events. Faculty, graduates, and family members all gathered (remotely) to celebrate our 2020 graduates. While these online events could not truly take the place of a normal graduation weekend, they did provide a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our newest alumni.

Mental health has taken on a central role during the pandemic. There is growing evidence that the mental health of our country—and our world—is suffering. The skills that you learned while at Loma Linda University are needed now more than ever. I wish you the best as you begin or continue to serve the world and to further the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ.

Student Awards



**NICOLETTE
YOUKHANEH**
2020 President's Award

Nicolette Youkhaneh chose Loma Linda University because she shared the values of continuing the teaching and healing ministry of Jesus Christ and sought the opportunity to grow professionally, personally, and spiritually. She also values the the University's emphasis on community service and the diverse educational and clinical experiences available within the Department of Psychology.

Nicolette graduated from American High School in 2011. From high school she enrolled in community college, and then transferred to the University of California at Santa Barbara, where she graduated with a BS in Biopsychology in 2015. She was accepted to the School of Behavioral Health and enrolled in the Clinical Psychology PsyD program, receiving her MA in Clinical Psychology in 2017.

She was commissioned into the United States Navy in August 2016, after selection for the Health Professions Scholarship Program. She is an active duty Naval officer who completed her clinical internship at the Naval Medicine Readiness and Training Command Portsmouth in Virginia. Following internship, she received orders to transfer to the Naval Medicine Readiness and Training Command Twenty-Nine Palms, where she now serves as a Navy Psychologist and provides services to Navy and Marine Corps personnel stationed at the largest Marine Corps base in the world.

Nicolette volunteers at her church, as well as in organizations that support military veteran and special needs populations. Nicolette is a truly outstanding student and human being. She is deeply honest and strongly adheres to the highest moral and ethical principles. She always sets the highest standards for herself, and consistently meets those standards.



DENISE DAO TRAN
2020 LLU Dean's Award for
Doctoral Degree Programs

Denise Dao Tran combines intellectual brilliance and eagerness to learn with genuine kindness and compassion. She displays unparalleled perseverance, coupled with integrity and honor.

As a student, Denise consistently supported LLU's mission through her volunteer work. She has worked with a program that offers fine and performing arts courses serving adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She has also actively participated in several fundraising events at churches in San Diego, Orange County, Redlands, and Portland, including collecting health supplies and toiletries for the homeless; donating blankets, toys, and diapers for babies of low-income families; raising money for food, water, and medicine for children in Africa; collecting school supplies and holiday gifts for children whose families cannot afford Christmas gifts; and raising money for retired priests and nuns.

Denise Dao Tran grew up in Orange County, California and earned her BS in Psychology at University of California, San Diego in 2012 before enrolling in Loma Linda University's Clinical Psychology PhD program in the Department of Psychology at Loma Linda University. Denise chose to pursue her PhD at LLU because she aligns with the values emphasized by the institution. Her professional aspirations include engaging in research and program development focused on the prevention and early intervention of adolescent substance use. She also aspires to mentor psychology students through teaching, research, and clinical supervision.

SHAWNI JONES

2020 Dean's Award for Master's Degree Programs

Shawni Jones was born and raised in Chaska, Minnesota. She received her bachelor's degree in Neuroscience from Brigham Young University, after which she enrolled in the Child Life Specialist MS program at Loma Linda University in the School of Behavioral Health. After completing her classes in December 2019, she began her clinical work as an intern at Loma Linda University Children's Health (LLUCH) in preparation for becoming a full-time Child Life Specialist following her graduation last June.

Through her school and work experiences, Shawni was involved in a variety of service and leadership opportunities. These included volunteering in the playroom at LLUCH on the Acute Care unit and

training other child life volunteers in providing support and activities to patients and families at bedside. She also facilitated and developed monthly interventions for the Pediatric Brain and Spine Tumor Family Support Group. Further, she assisted her professors with planning, implementation, and the leading of other students as they provided therapeutic interventions for children and their families during global program trips to the Children's Hospital of Zhejiang University School of Medicine in Hangzhou, China and at The Door of Faith Orphanage in La Mision, Mexico.

Shawni has a strong passion for connecting with people, especially children. She currently serves in her church as a regional activity coordinator for young

adults, and participates in weekly service opportunities within her congregation where she participates in community projects and programs that support Redlands and neighboring cities implementing and sustaining food drives. She has also volunteered in a local non-profit organization, Glocally Connected, which supports refugee children and families by teaching English, promoting human rights, and building confidence in their communities.



Awards

RANDY ROBERTS

2020-21 Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Randy Roberts was born in South America of missionary parents Bob and Bettye Roberts. Until college age, the majority of his life was spent in Latin American countries.

Dr. Roberts graduated from Southwestern Adventist University in Keene, Texas, in 1981 with a major in Theology, and a minor in Modern Languages. For over five years he was a pastor in the Texas Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. During this time he completed a Master of Divinity degree from the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Theological Seminary at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, from which he graduated in 1985.

In 1987, he began work as a chaplain at Loma Linda University Medical Center, where he served for more than seven years providing patient and staff support, spiritual care and counseling. He was also instrumental in establishing and leading the Medical Center's grief recovery program. During this time he completed a Master of Arts degree in Marriage and Family Therapy at United States International University in San Diego, California. He is licensed as a marriage and family therapist by the state of California.

Dr. Roberts began teaching full-time with the Loma Linda University School of Religion in early 1994. While there, he worked as Associate Professor of Theology and Ministry and served as the Associate Dean for the School of Religion. In 1996, he completed his studies

and graduated with a Doctor of Ministry degree from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

While with the School of Religion, he also served on the pastoral staff of the Corona Seventh-day Adventist Church (from 1996–2000), the latter part of that time serving as the senior pastor. In September of 2000, he began his duties as the senior pastor of the Loma Linda University Church of Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California. Dr. Roberts was selected as the Vice President of Spiritual Life and Mission for Loma Linda University Health and has been serving in this capacity since October 2016.

Dr. Roberts has spoken to many and varied audiences both nationally and internationally, has written articles for various publications, and has authored one book for Pacific Press, titled *Waiting and Longing* (formerly published under the title *The End is Near [Again]*).



Graduate Ausmila Aklidikou awarded by department and school



Ausmila (Oz) Aklidikou graduated with his MS in Counseling from the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences in June 2020. Mr. Aklidikou also successfully completed the department's Drug and Alcohol Counseling certificate program alongside the completion of his clinical placements at the CFS Clinic in the Behavioral Health Institute and at His House, a residential substance use treatment facility in Colton.

Oz was also recognized as the Outstanding Counseling Student for 2020 by the CFS Department and is the recipient of the Wil Alexander Whole Person Care Award. Mr. Aklidikou demonstrated himself to be a leader among his cohort in the counseling program. We wish Ausmila all the best as he continues his professional development as a registered professional clinical counselor associate.

New Academic Programs

- Beginning in the Fall of 2021, the Department of Counseling and Family Sciences is adding to the main campus (face-to-face) **MS in Marital and Family Therapy an online/hybrid option** (pending final approval by the WASC Senior College and University Commission).
- The implementation of the Doctor of Social Work (DSW) online/hybrid program has been **delayed to Fall 2021**. Applications are now open and accessible under the heading "Clinical Leadership, DSW (Online)."

Child life training enhanced by Hospital-University partnership

Cross-campus engagement with Child Life services at Loma Linda University Children's Health (LLUCH) began in 2003 with a request from the Children's Hospital, spearheaded by Dinah Evans, Director of Child Life and Language Services at LLUCH, for the University to create a Child Life Specialist MS degree program. The University and the School of Science and Technology (now the School of Behavioral Health), responded to the request, and the Child Life Specialist MS program was approved to begin in 2004.

Representatives from both LLUCH and LLU sought to identify existing staff who could meet the qualifications to direct the new program as well as support the clinical needs and collaborative goals that were the original rationale underpinning the development of the degree program. The result of this deliberation and search was to appoint Michelle Minyard-Widmann to transition from the LLUCH to LLU as the first and continuing program director of the Child Life Specialist MS program.

Soon after Ms. Minyard-Widmann transitioned to the academic side of campus, she began sending students to LLUCH to complete their practicum (pre-internship) and internship experiences. Although growth of the program was initially slow and involved clarifying issues such as the priority placement of LLU students, the collaboration between LLUCH and LLU Child Life Specialist representatives began and has remained strong. Among the early and continuing mutual benefits of this collaboration has been the development and shared support for numerous hospital-university-community events, including the Family Health Fair, Children's Day, Grief Camps, and many more.

The availability of students to support these events has assisted the LLUCH Child Life staff in running community events while concurrently being able to meet staffing needs for inpatient care. These events have also provided students with wonderful supervised learning experiences that illustrate for students the importance of hospital-community engagement, and how they can support these same purposes in their future professional roles as hospital-based Child Life Specialists. Other examples of reciprocal benefit have included, but have not been limited to: 1) the hosting of the California Child Life Symposiums by the academic program, which provides LLUCH Child Life staff with continuing education opportunities; 2) development by LLUCH of a paid 12-month fellowship for a LLU Child Life Specialist graduate (now in its fourth year) that transitions to full-time employment at the fellowship; 3) the shared employment of Kirstin Fowler (a year ago) to serve as placement supervisor at LLUCH to support increasing the number of clinical placements of LLU students at LLUCH; 4) the OWL/LLUCH trainings (led by Kirstin Fowler) that utilize LLU Child Life Specialist students' final oral presentations (i.e., presentations that emphasize leading edge and creative care applications); 5) the continuous use of LLUCH staff to support the contract teaching needs of the Child Life Specialist MS degree program; and 6) most recently the expansion of inpatient collaboration to include an outpatient-based post-graduate fellowship for LLU Child Life Specialist graduates through the Mastering Each New Direction (MEND) program for children with chronic medical conditions.

Now in its 16th year, this collaboration continues to remain strong, with new and continuing examples of cross-linkage and support emerging every year. However, the value of this amazing and vital relationship has never been made clearer than when the impact of COVID-19 began to derail our usual academic and clinical functions. As such, in March 2020, all of the students in all of the Child Life Specialist programs across the country had their internships paused. Students were sent home to wait with no certainty regarding how or when the clinical hours required for degree completion could be resumed. At LLU this meant that not only were all of our students sent home from their placements at other hospitals in California and across the United States, but that all internships at our LLUCH were likewise paused. Both the program faculty and the Dean of the School of Behavioral Health reached out to the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP) to explore the creation of qualifying clinical exceptions that would allow our students to complete their degrees on time, but to no avail. However, because of the intentional continuous engagement bridging the academic and clinical components of LLU, the only health sciences center in the United States with both direct services and a graduate degree program in Child Life, the pause in internships was short-lived. As such, with the existence of the aforementioned 'One Loma Linda' collaboration, the creativity of Dinah Evans (Director of Child



Life and Language Services at LLUCH), and the endorsement of LLUCH leadership, all of the LLU Child Life Specialist students (not just those previously placed at the LLUCH) were supported to complete their clinical requirements at LLUCH and graduate on time. In addition, recognizing that all child life practicums (pre-internships sites) in California had also closed due to COVID-19, LLUCH supported all of the LLU Child Life students needing practicum (pre-internship) placements to complete all of their practicum hours during the Summer 2020 term, and as such, successfully progress through their mid-degree requirements. As part of these arrangements, and in support of the needs of the LLUCH, the School of Behavioral Health covered the entire cost of the core supervisor, who otherwise would likely have been placed on reduced effort due to the variability of pandemic-related patient census.

The cross-campus collaboration that supports the clinical and academic purposes of Child Life Specialists at LLU is the result of regular communication and positive regard and response to individual and shared partner needs. These ongoing mutual efforts to support an exceptional academic-clinical relationship have, in addition to other factors, earned the academic program the distinction of being the gold standard of Child Life Specialist education in the United States. And in the words of the program director, Michelle Minyard-Widmann, "I feel that the placement of our program on a healthcare campus is unique and provides greater opportunities or learning than exist in degree programs located in different settings." Finally, the benefits of continuous cross-institutional collaboration not only support graduates, but also provide innovative examples of how service access for patients and families can be expanded through creative academic-practice initiatives.

School of Behavioral Health faculty welcomes two new members

We are excited to introduce and welcome two new faculty members to the School of Behavioral Health: Alex (Oleksandr) Dubov and Aarti Nair. Dr. Dubov joins the Division of Interdisciplinary Studies as an Associate Professor, while Dr. Nair joins the Department of Psychology as an Assistant Professor.

Dr. Alex (Oleksandr) Dubov



Dr. Dubov earned his PhD in Bioethics from Duquesne University. His thesis investigated the use of Behavioral Economics to facilitate crucial choices at the end of life. He completed his postdoctoral training at Yale School of Public Health Center for Interdisciplinary Research on AIDS as a REIDS fellow (Research

Education Institute for Diverse Scholars). While at Yale University, he was awarded a grant to design a public health HIV prevention program based on preferences of Ukrainian LGBT. This research was also supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) fund and presented to the Ukrainian Ministry of Health.

Dr. Dubov has also worked at Emory University Hospital as a Palliative Care Counselor and at AdventHealth Orlando (formerly Florida Hospital Orlando) as a Certified Healthcare Ethics Consultant.

His research interests are in leveraging new and emerging technologies as innovative approaches for supporting the implementation of combination (biomedical, behavioral, and health system) interventions to prevent HIV infection among groups that are epidemiologically at high risk for infection and whose prevention needs are complicated by their socially marginalized statuses in their communities.

Dr. Dubov will support SBH as an expert in bioethics and implementation science. He will also continue to pursue his research agenda, facilitate the expansion of regional research collaboration supporting the needs of persons with HIV or AIDS, and provide integrated and focused attention within our School regarding the needs of these populations as part of our behavioral health priorities.

Dr. Aarti Nair



Dr. Nair received her bachelor's degree in Psychology and Anthropology from St. Xavier's College in Mumbai, India. Following the completion of her master's degree in Clinical Psychology from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Dr. Nair worked at the Center for

Autism Research and the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Her Center work sparked her long-standing interest in the neural substrates of autism spectrum disorder and neuropsychology. She continued this line of research while studying in the San Diego State University/University of California, San Diego Joint Doctoral Program. She obtained her PhD in Neuropsychology in 2015, and went on to complete her clinical internship and postdoctoral

training at the UCLA Semel Institute for Neuroscience and Human Behavior.

Dr. Nair's current research interests are in the neural basis of social cognition deficits in adolescents with autism spectrum disorder and early-onset psychosis. She is specifically interested in applying multimodal neuroimaging techniques (functional and structural MRI, and magnetic resonance spectroscopy) to examine changes in neural architecture affected by targeted interventions in these populations.

Her research has been supported by grants awarded by Autism Speaks, the Autism Science Foundation, and the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). Dr. Nair has served as ad hoc reviewer for several journals such as *Biological Psychiatry*, *Molecular Autism*, *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, and the *Journal of Neuroscience*. Her research findings have been published in prestigious journals such as *Brain*, *Human Brain Mapping*, and *Cerebral Cortex*, amongst others.

Dr. Nair is excited to join the Loma Linda University Department of Psychology for its emphasis on providing top-grade healthcare to underserved communities and the diversity of its faculty, students, and patients.



Dr. Brian Distelberg receives LLUH Values Exemplar award

Dr. Brian Distelberg, recipient of an LLUH Values Exemplar award for 2020, is an extraordinary innovator and collaborator. His dedication to excellence and integrity is evident in all he does to support SBH, LLU, and the entire LLUH system. His support for students and colleagues needing support to conceptualize research studies and address statistical questions is generous and used throughout this School and across the University. Within all of these engagements his character comes through to illustrate that he is deeply spiritual, kind, and genuinely regards the worth and value of all persons.

As a clinical innovator his work is without a doubt one of the most significant developments across the LLU/LLUH enterprise and has greatly influenced the integration of behavioral health interventions in medical care. This innovation, which is referred to as MEND (Mastering Each New Direction) has enabled LLU/LLUH to provide cutting-edge interventions that tangibly demonstrate our institution's compassion and understanding for chronically ill children, adults, and their families. This program has changed the lives and health of hundreds—helping them to pursue healthier, non-stigmatizing lives supported by whole person care principles. The results of this innovation have also brought national attention to LLU/LLUH. This work has now resulted in the largest grant ever received by SBH, and is likely among the larger received at LLU/LLUH.

In spite of this accomplishment, Dr. Distelberg remains humble and generous with his time and support for others. In all ways he exemplifies the values of our institution and deserves this recognition for his persistent excellence.

Faculty Publications

BY DEPARTMENT

Counseling and Family Sciences

- Williams-Reade, JM., Tapanes, D., Distelberg, B., Montgomery, S. (2020). Pediatric chronic illness management: A qualitative dyadic analysis of adolescent patient and parent illness narratives. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 46(1), doi: 10.1111/jmft.12377.
- Marie-Mitchell, A., Watkins, HBR, Copado, IA, Distelberg, B., (2020). Use of the whole child assessment to identify children at risk of poor outcomes. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 104, doi: doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2020.104489.
- Distelberg, B., Castronova, M., Tapanes, D., Allen, J. & Puder, D. (2020). Evaluation of the healthcare cost offsets of MEND: A family systems mental health integration approach. *Family Process*. Doi: 10.1111/famp.12564.

Psychology

- Nair, A., Jolliffe, M., Lograsso, Y., & Bearden, C. E. (2020). A Review of Default Mode Network Connectivity and Its Association With Social Cognition in Adolescents With Autism Spectrum Disorder and Early-Onset Psychosis. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 11, 614. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2020.00614>.
- Neece, C., McIntyre, L. L., and Fenning, R. (2020) Examining the impact of COVID-19 in ethnically diverse families with young children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 64: 739–749. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jir.12769>.
- Tan, A., Morton, K. R., Lee, J. W., Hartman, R., & Lee, G. (2020). Adverse childhood experiences and depressive symptoms: Protective effects of dietary flavonoids. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 131, 109957. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpsychores.2020.109957>.
- Boyd, K. C. (2020). Belief in free will is beneficial. In P. Clayton & J. W. Walters (Eds.), *What's Up With Free Will: Ethics and Religion After Neuroscience* (pp. 38-47). Eugene, OR: Cascade.
- Hartman R.E., Nathan N.H., Ghosh N., Pernia C.D., Law J., Nuryyev R., Plaia A., Yusof A., Tone B., Dulcich M., Wakeman D.R., Dilmac N., Niles W.D., Sidman R.L., Obenaus A., Snyder E.Y., Ashwal S. A Biomarker for Predicting Responsiveness to Stem Cell Therapy Based on Mechanism-of-Action: Evidence from Cerebral Injury. *Cell Reports* 2020 May 12;31(6) doi: 10.1016/j.celrep.2020.107622.
- Rajaram S., Jones J., Lee G.J. Plant-based Dietary Patterns, Plant Foods, and Age-Related Cognitive Decline. *Advances in Nutrition*, 2019; 10(Supplement_4): S422-S436. PMID: 31728502.
- Flynn, P. M., Betancourt, H., Emerson, N. D., Nunez, E. I., & Nance, C. M. (2020). Health professional cultural competence reduces the psychological and behavioral impact of negative healthcare encounters. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 26(3), 271-279. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/cdp0000295>.

Social Work and Social Ecology

- Baek, K., Oritz, L., Alemi, Q., Mann, S., Kumar, A., & Montgomery, S. (in press). Factors influencing formal and informal resource utilization for mental distress among Korean Americans in southern California. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*.
- Alemi, Q., Stempel, C., Shabaik, H., & Kim, E. (2020). Refugees and COVID-19: achieving a comprehensive public health response. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2471/BLT.20.271080>.
- Shabaik, H., Alemi, Q., Menten, J. Pavlish, C., & Lee, E. (2020). Preventive cancer screening among resettled refugee women from Muslim-majority countries: a systematic review. *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 22, 1067-93. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10903-019-00967-6>.



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School of Behavioral Health

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Your gift matters to **Zachary W. Brenes**

"I decided to come to Loma Linda University because it seemed like God flew doors open for me to be here, and I am very grateful for that."

Zachary is a recipient of a Loma Linda University Seventh-day Adventist Worthy Student Scholarship.

Hometown:

Walla Walla, WA

Program:

Psychology, PsyD

Expected graduation June 2024

Why he chose Loma Linda University School of Behavioral Health:

I grew up enrolled in Adventist education, but I never thought that LLU would be where I ended up. It wasn't until after I was finished with my collegiate career that I decided that psychology would be the route that I wanted to pursue. I inquired very late as to how to be a competitive applicant/what it would take for me to be able to enroll the following year, and I was met by "you should just apply for this coming year." I decided

to come to Loma Linda University because it seemed like God flew doors open for me to be here, and I am very grateful for that.

Career Goals:

After graduating with my PsyD, it is my intention to be a practicing psychotherapist who specializes in men's mental health. I believe that therapy is more stigmatized for men than it is for women, and it's my goal to help reduce some of that stigma, and to guide men (and all of my clients) to a greater understanding of their deepest selves. I would eventually like to open a private practice.

The Impact of a Scholarship:

Thank you so much for your generous gift. It was greatly appreciated, especially with the outbreak of COVID-19. It came just at the right time.

For information on how you can provide scholarship support for School of Behavioral Health students, contact Kemi Adeoye at oladeoye@llu.edu or 909-558-3585. Or donate to SBH online at www.giving.lluh.org/SBH