



The FORUM

Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee Fall 2007

For this fall issue of the forum we are going to help get you back into the academic year mindset. First, with a look back over how some of your colleagues spent their summer vacations (both professionally and personally) we present "What I did on my summer vacation", a series of short interviews. Next, for those of you who are gearing up to teach this semester, see "Teaching Yourself to Teach in a World of Research" for teaching tips from two professors recognized for their commitment to teaching. Looking ahead a bit, in this issue we report on some of the results of the recent survey of SPSP graduate members. For those of you who are on the job market, we have some words of wisdom from current faculty on the job hunt. Lastly, for those of you looking to put off thinking about the start of the academic year as long as possible, we welcome your suggestions for topics you would like to see in future issues of the Forum, or anything else you would like to see the GSC do for you.

Teaching Yourself to Teach in a World of Research

Compared to its more high-profile sibling, research, teaching is one aspect of academic life that is often left underdeveloped in graduate school. With so much emphasis on research, it is difficult for students to develop their teaching skills and, effectively, their teaching dossiers, a key component of one's job application package. The realization that teaching is often given a backseat to research can be a shocking one, given that our exposure to the world of academia at the undergraduate level comes mostly from our classroom interactions with faculty. From that perspective, it is hard to imagine that our favorite professor has much else going on in life other than remembering to post lecture notes before class or finding a cool video clip to illustrate

a tricky concept. Students really are the best judge of a great teacher, so in this article you'll hear from two Professors who have been formally recognized for their excellence in teaching. To find these model pedagogues, I had to look no further than my own department to Professors Steve Joordens and Marc Fournier, who both placed in this year's Top 10 of the Best Postsecondary Lecturer in Ontario Competition. This recognition is a huge honor and an admirable accomplishment, as the award is for best lecturer regardless of discipline and the competition among extremely talented lecturers is fierce. Given their tremendous success in teaching, Professors Joordens and Fournier have much advice to offer graduate students who are just de-

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Sorting Through the Job Application Process

Inevitably, we will each face the day when we realize that we will soon be searching for a job (or should have been searching already!). I spoke with Dr. Lauri Jensen-Campbell and Dr. Mark Frame, both from the University of Texas at Arlington, about the job application process and share their advice with you here.

Perhaps the first place to start is to identify the type of job you want. Are you looking for a teaching position or a research-based position? Prior to interviewing, it is important to research the various schools and positions you will be applying for. Find out as

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What I did on my summer vacation...

Do you ever wonder what other social psychology graduate students are doing with their summer? Do you feel guilty for going on vacation when you think you should be working? Do you feel guilty for sitting in your office all day when it is absolutely beautiful outside? Feel guilty no more, in this article we visit with social psychology graduate students to see what they have been up to this summer.

Most of the students who were interviewed agreed that they did not accomplish everything they planned to do because they tried to pack in a bit too much, but they also agreed that they still accomplished quite a bit. Erin O'Mara (University of Tennessee) suggests "a common misconception about summer is that it is much longer than it really is, so of course not everything on the 'to do' list was accomplished." Ioana Latu (Georgia State University) said "I always overplan for summers and I always end my summers being disappointed and tired."

Most students enjoyed a mix of work and relaxation this summer and this is reflected when asked what some of the most important things that they accomplished were. Julie Maertens (Colorado State University) said "the best thing I did this summer was take a few weeks off. I also taught a summer lab course and did some background research for my dissertation project." Jennifer Rodden (SUNY-Stony Brook) did a variety of things such as writing her masters paper and editing it for publication, catching up on data analysis,

attending the Summer Institute in Social Psychology (SISP), submitting an IRB application, preparing for a research methods course she will be teaching, and starting her third year specialties paper. Latu managed to prepare her first class and get several research proposals done this summer. O'Mara says "by far, the most important thing I did this summer was attend SISP in Austin, Texas. SISP was such an amazing experience both academically and socially. I had the pleasure of taking the Self-Regulation and Goals course, taught by Jim Shah and Constantine Sedikides. It was a great opportunity to learn about a research area I previously had little experience with, and also to get to know the most wonderful social psychology graduate students in the world (literally)!" J. Taylor Moore (Colorado State University) completed his first year project, developed an idea for his thesis, set up a laboratory experiment for the Fall, and took a lead on a large grant project.

In addition to all the important things already mentioned, summer is an excellent time to prepare conference submissions and publications. All of the graduate students that were interviewed submitted presentations for the upcoming SPSP conference. In addition, several students revised or submitted manuscripts for publication. For example, Rodden worked on a manuscript based on her second year project, O'Mara resubmitted manuscripts to the Journal of Personality

and Social Psychology and Anxiety, Stress and Coping, and Latu submitted a publication as well.

You are probably wondering if these students were able to fit in any relaxation time since they have been so busy working this summer. All of them spent time traveling, relaxing, and visiting family and friends this summer in addition to all of their work accomplishments. Latu went on several trips to visit family and friends. Maertens took a salsa class and a cooking class. Rodden attended two weddings, visited college friends, spent some time at the beach, and took a road trip to Texas. Moore did some camping in Yellowstone National Park, and spent time hiking, biking and reading. O'Mara took several weekend trips to places like Las Vegas and Toronto. Also, while she is at home she tried to spend time with friends as much as possible to break up the work she had to do.

So, what advice do these very productive students have to give to other graduate students to make the most of their summers? Latu suggests "take some time off for relaxation, don't overplan, and set realistic goals." O'Mara says "I think the key to making the most of your summer is to remember that you can't spend every waking moment doing work. A common mistake I make is trying to do too much, and getting burnt out too quickly." Maertens suggests "if you can afford (financially and academically) to take even a little time for yourself during the summer, do it. You'll feel

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SPSP Survey: How do you stack up?

A few months ago the SPSP Graduate student committee undertook a survey of its members. Over 150 of you responded and filled out our online survey about your career goals, satisfaction with graduate school, and financial situation. To see the full results of this survey find our poster at SPSP in Albuquerque, "Characteristics of SPSP Graduate Student Members". But, as a teaser some of the results are highlighted below. Thanks to everyone who filled out the survey or provided us with feedback on earlier versions of it.

Respondents were, on average, female (71.8%), White (76.3%), 27 years old and in their second to fifth year of graduate study in a PhD program in the U.S.

Students reported attending almost two conferences per year, and reported that they received at least partial financial support for about half of them from their department or advisor. We hope that for all of you one of those 1.9 that you attend next year is SPSP!

Perhaps the most interesting results came when we asked students their own career goals as well as the goals they thought their advisor held for them. In general there was a high level of agreement between students own goals and those they perceived their advisors to have for them. Nearly 80% reported their desired job would be both research and teaching at a university (sorry job seekers, looks like there will be competition in

academia!) and a similar number reported that was their advisor's goal for them as well. According to this survey, the least desired career of the choices offered was teaching at a Junior or Community College. However, almost 20% of respondents reported never discussing career goals with their advisor.

To see the full results, including how much debt students expect to leave grad school with and where students differed from their perceptions of their advisor's goals for them stop by our poster at SPSP.

By David Portnoy

Congratulations to Award Winners!

The GSC was excited to sponsor the Outstanding Research Award for the first time this year. Students were invited to submit applications for the opportunity to speak at the GSC's symposium at SPSP 2008. Applications went through two rounds of peer review. After Round 1, the proposals from fifteen Finalists were submitted to reviewers for Round 2 and four winners were finally chosen. Along with speaking at the GSC's SPSP 2008 symposium, they will receive Student Travel Awards of \$500 towards their conference travel expenses. Our Winner's are: Jeremy Jamieson (Northeastern U.), Elizabeth Paluck (Yale U.), Zachary

Rothschild (U. of Colorado at Colorado Springs), and Jessica Salvatore (Princeton U.). Congratulations!

The GSC would also like to extend a huge thank you to our student reviewers. These students volunteered their time to review applications: Nathan Arbuckle, Michael Cohn, Keith William Dowd, Jessica Gonzalez, Jesse Graham, Michaela Huber, Cassie Hull, Richard V. Kendrick, Jennifer Pattershall, Jennifer Peach, Suzanne Riela, Laura Selkirk, Randi A. Shedlosky-Shoemaker, Lavonia Smith LeBeau, Jordan D. Troisi, and Melissa J. Williams. Thank you!

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much better equipped to manage the intensity of the next academic year." Moore says "enjoy your summer, but also use it wisely." Finally, Rodden suggests to "allow yourself some time to have fun-it will make you more productive during the times that you set aside for work."

By Megan O'Grady

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Teaching, cont. from Page 1

veloping their own teaching careers.

Any developing skill can benefit from an overarching set of goals and in the world of teaching, this set of goals is known as one's teaching philosophy. Joordens notes that hiring committees are asking for an explicit teaching philosophy more and more and, thus, distilling your ideas about and hopes for teaching is an important task. His own teaching philosophy is simple: he wants to make his students excited about what he's teaching in order to give them the best possible opportunity to understand

the material. Fournier also agrees that having a teaching philosophy is important, noting that "having a teaching philosophy has helped to prioritize course objectives when teaching-related resources are limited – and such resources, of course, are always limited". Reassuringly, Fournier also notes that one's teaching philosophy does not emerge overnight, instead, it is a body of work that is refined with time.

With time, lecturers come to recognize the teaching materials and methods best suited to their teaching style. However, almost

every lecturer has been forced to adopt modern technology (e.g. audio, video, email, the internet, PowerPoint, etc.) as a teaching tool for better or worse. Given the recent discussions among the SPSP community regarding unrealistic accessibility demands being placed on professors by students over email, I asked Joordens and Fournier how they incorporate modern technology successfully into their classes. Both lecturers use PowerPoint and the internet (website, online video lectures) regularly and agree that *Continued on Page 6*

President's Corner

Another school year is in full swing: the new RAs are being trained, updated priorities are set for getting studies off the ground, and the first-years have descended on campus. As you settle into your daily routine, it can be valuable to keep thinking about the big picture. Where have you been? What got you to where you are now? And perhaps most important, where are you headed? Our busy lifestyles keep us running from meeting to class to meeting again, and so it's easy to overlook the whole chunk of our life that doesn't revolve around the next grad school milestone. You may actually wonder what's so wrong with that. If so, ask any clinical student about self-care or any I/O student about work-life balance to get their views on life's big picture and suggestions for keeping life in check. Similarly, our diligent focus on our immediate pursuits can keep us from considering important assumptions we have about how our school year should progress.

As graduate students, we expect a certain level of excellence from ourselves, but brilliance alone does not ensure a successful year. Trusting our abilities and being propelled by our ideals helped us make the leap into a world of continual deadlines, evaluations, and work. But this messy and ambiguous world requires us to be strategic and practical. Wasn't some of the best advice we've gotten was to overestimate estimates? So if we thought a project should take 2 months to complete, maybe we ought to be prepared for it to take double since unexpected delays do happen. Furthermore, have you asked yourself whether you see your work more as the study that's going to prompt major changes in the field or as one piece of a much larger research agenda? Though no one can fault you for being ambitious or thorough, it can really aid you to have at least some vague contingency plans in mind and to have a humble view of your research. While training our attention on the immediate details in front of us is critical, engaging in a little pre-planning and self-appraisal also serves to maintain our productivity.

As much as we may wish things were different, our work typically involves only incremental progress and many trade-offs. Remembering the big picture can help sustain us; there is a life after grad school as unbelievable as that sounds. So while we're students, we do not need to do that elusive study with the ingenious design, perfect execution, and the results that confirmed our predictions. At whatever stage in our graduate school careers we're at, we can and should give ourselves a pat on the back for getting to where we have so far. Here's to a fall semester full of progress, purpose and high spirits.

By Elizabeth Lee

Job prep, cont. from Page 1

much as you can about the current professors' research interests. What are starting salaries like? How will you fit in the department? What is the school like? Once you have gathered information about the various positions, make a concrete list of why you are interested in applying for specific jobs. This information will be useful when you interview. Be prepared to answer the question of "Why do you want to work here?" with something other than "because I need a job." This information should be passed along to your reference letter writers; it provides them with an idea of how you could fit into specific department and allows them to emphasize your strengths accordingly. You should also provide addressed, stamped envelopes with names of to whom the reference letters should be addressed. Also, keep your professors informed of how things are going, especially early in the process. They may be able to put in a good word for you.

When it comes time to prepare for the interview portion, there are several things you should consider. Again, consider who your colleagues would be and possible collaborations that you might form. Realistically consider how much lab space you need and what equipment (e.g., cameras, EEG or fMRI equipment, questionnaires, television) is necessary for you to be a productive researcher. Be sure to consider equipment such as lab computers, tables, chairs, statistical programs/licenses, office computer/printer, and office furniture. You should go into the interview with a realistic estimate of how much start-up money and space you will require.

You may require less money if you do not need to supply your own office furniture or licenses for statistical programs. Consider whether you will need and/or want graduate students and how they will be funded. Speaking of money, you might consider putting some funds away for travel; while you should be refunded for travel expenses, you may need to pay out of pocket and be reimbursed later. Be sure to check the policy with the schools you plan to interview with!

As for the job talk, PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! Then practice again. Present your talk to faculty at your university and field questions from them. Ask for constructive criticism. Keep in mind who will be attending the talk at the various schools you interview with. Will the audience be largely psychology professors or a blend of professors from multiple disciplines? Should the talk be an example of your teaching style or a presentation of your research program? Be prepared. Have a back-up of your presentation. If there is time, ask to see the room you will be presenting in. Be flexible if there are equipment malfunctions and try to go with the flow. You should also prepare a list of questions that you would like answered. Write these down and bring them with you as it is easy to forget when you are "on the spot." Here are some questions you might consider asking:

- What is the teaching load? Do first year professors have a reduction in teaching? What classes might you teach? Is GTA help available? What is the typical class size?
- What is the service load like for new faculty members? Is there a

sabbatical program (if so, how does it work)?

- What is the retirement plan like; what does the state/university contribute? What are the medical leave policies? How health insurance benefits are available?

- What is the average start-up money? What is included? How much lab space will you have? When is the start-up available? Is it given in a lump sum or over several years?

- How accessible are the kind of participants you need for your research?

- What is the tenure process like? How many publications are expected per year? Are you expected to get grants (if so, what types)?

- How supportive is the Office of Grants and Research? Do they help with budgets? Are there internal grants available to new faculty? Are there any problems with the IRB? Will the IRB allow deception experiments? Does the department allow buy-outs on grants; what is the cost?

- What is the cost of living? If there is time, consider talking with a realtor and touring the area.

There is a lot to consider and prepare for when applying for jobs (not to mention you are probably trying to finish your dissertation while job hunting!). Make use of the resources available to you such as recent graduates, your advisor, other professors, job postings and listserves, and networking opportunities at conferences. And while you are trying to sort through the steps in the job application, remember to stay positive!

Good luck to everyone applying for jobs and post-docs this year!

By Jennifer Knack

Teaching, cont. from Page 4

this allows students to spend more time listening and less time taking notes. With regards to email, Fournier notes that although very convenient for students, email is quite inconvenient for instructors, as it is almost impossible to provide answers of the same depth and quality as those given when face-to-face. Fournier suggests that these problems can be avoided with clearly stated and defensible policies concerning the use of email and other forms of communication. Fournier's own policy is that questions about course content must be posed during office hours. Joordens take on technology is that modern methods, if used correctly, can be used to improve the learning experience. He believes that "the way you assess matches the way students learn; if you assess with multiple choice, they will just memorize. Assess shallowly and they will learn shallowly". To encourage a deeper understanding of concepts, Joordens and his graduate student Dwayne Pare developed the Peer Scholar system whereby students are responsible for not only writing their own position papers throughout the term, but also for grading the assignments of five of their peers. In this way, students are able to get into a critical mindset and understand what effective communication really is. Joordens points to Peer Scholar (which will soon be available across the US and Canada) as the best use of education technology he's seen. In addition to the Peer Scholar system, Joordens also videotapes and posts all of his lectures online. By doing

so, he is able to accommodate all types of learning styles and "teach 1500 students better than they were taught in classes of only 40".

Even the best of lecturers have an occasional bad lecture, and these "bad days" are what Joordens thinks of as the hardest part of teaching. Sometimes you just won't be able to make that connection with your audience and these are learning opportunities, just like your good days. In these situations, it's a good idea to make a list of reasons for why the connection wasn't there, and use this to learn for next time. When asked what the hardest part of teaching is for him, Fournier mentions dealing with cheaters. To combat this problem Fournier recommends a proactive approach including things like randomized seating arrangements and individualized examination booklets.

To graduate students just embarking on their teaching careers, Fournier and Joordens both have some choice words of advice. Fournier recommends one thing above all: "be organized and be nice". Joordens advice is to "wear your interest on your sleeve". When you're teaching, your level of enthusiasm is infectious, if you can really communicate that you're interested and excited, your students will pick up on this and follow your lead. He also recommends taking abstract concepts down to the level of everyday life by connecting them to ideas that students can relate to (e.g. music, dating, movies, current events, etc). If you show them these concrete examples, the students will be able to go back up to the theoretical with you. Most importantly, Joordens

advises graduate students to truly appreciate the power of teaching. "With research you impact a small group of people, with teaching you impact thousands of students each year. Teaching isn't a job, it isn't a chore: it's an opportunity to have an influence. As cliché as it sounds, teaching really is your opportunity to do one small thing everyday to make positive change in the world. By teaching people to think and communicate well, you really do help to make the world a better place". Happy teaching everyone!

By Sonia Kang

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