

# The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee

Spring 2009

*This issue of the FORUM offers a recap of the GSC events held at the annual SPSP conference in Tampa in February this year. Many of the events offered by the GSC served to increase networking opportunities (Mentor Lunch, Social Hour), to provide opportunities to present and be recognized for research achievements (GSC Poster Award, Outstanding Research Award Symposium), and to offer valuable information and resources to students (GSC poster, Social Hour). We hope you found these events as invigorating as we did, and hope that if you didn't make it this year, you will watch for these events at SPSP in Las Vegas next year! This issue of the FORUM also has articles that deal with the application process for the academic job market, be sure to check out the articles on writing a teaching philosophy and common application materials that you will need to apply for academic jobs. Finally, the newly elected 2009-10 GSC members introduce themselves to you and Helen Lin offers her final reflections as GSC president. Have a great semester!*

## Thinking about going on the academic job market this fall? What you should do now

The common things that you must provide when applying for an academic job are: a statement of teaching interest/philosophy, a research statement, at least 3 letters of recommendation, re-prints/pre-prints of published journal articles, and a CV. If you are considering going on the academic job market later this year, you may need to have these items ready as early as August or September and it might be a good idea to start preparing each of these items and getting feedback from colleagues and mentors now. In the current and previous issues of the Forum, we have covered information about some of the application items you will need <http://www.spsp.org/student/studnews.htm>. This article provides a brief overview to get you started.

**Teaching philosophy:** A teaching philosophy describes why you find teaching important, what you value about teaching, how

you teach, and what experience you have. The current Forum issue has an excellent article about writing statements of teaching philosophy and the Summer 2008 issue also deals with this topic.

**Research Statement:** The research statement describes your program/s of research, usually in 1-3 pages. It gives readers an idea of what research you have done, how it all fits together, and where your program is going. See the Fall 2008 Forum for information on developing a program of research.

**Letters of recommendation:** You will need to ask at least three people who are familiar with your teaching and/or research abilities to write you strong letters of recommendation. Your Ph.D. advisor should always be one of your letter writers. Others could be faculty/colleagues that you have collaborated with or taught with. Choose

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## Where to start: Writing a statement of teaching philosophy

Although requests for statements of teaching philosophy are common in the academic market, many graduate students do not receive much training on how to write them. Fortunately, my institution has a Center for Teaching Excellence where students can learn about how to approach this challenging task. In this article, I will share some of the things that I learned at a workshop about writing a statement of teaching philosophy.

First of all, there is no single approach that will work for all writers. With that said, I will describe an exercise called the Four-Paragraph Model that is designed to help you reflect on your own

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# Meet the 2009-10 Graduate Student Committee

**President:** *Austin Lee Nichols*

I am a 3rd year graduate student at the University of Florida. My research currently focuses on the factors affecting success and confidence in the multiple audience problem. I also conduct research on the importance of personality traits for a variety of members and leaders. Generally, my research interests include self-presentation, leadership, groups, methodology, and personality. My involvement in and love for research started as a freshman at the Florida State University and has led to my goal to obtain an Assistant Professor position at a major research University. I am excited to serve my fellow graduate students as president for the next year. I plan to continue to improve the ideas and activities of past GSCs, and to incorporate ideas of current graduate students and my fellow GSC members, Kathleen, Marina, Nicole, and Jennifer. Please email me with any questions, comments, or suggestions you would like to raise— [austinln@ufl.edu](mailto:austinln@ufl.edu).

## **Members-at-large:**

***Marina Milyavskaya***

Hi everyone, my name is Marina Milyavskaya, I am a second year Masters/PhD student at McGill University, in Montreal, Canada. My main line of research, grounded in self-determination theory, examines the way in which the basic psychological needs (for autonomy, competence and relatedness) and motivation operate automatically to influence individual emotions, perceptions, and behaviour. My other research interests include the role of the basic psychological needs across important life contexts. I am really excited to serve on the GSC this year and I look forward to working with my fellow members to plan some great SPSP programs and provide resources for graduate students. Don't hesitate to contact me ([marina.milyavskaya@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:marina.milyavskaya@mail.mcgill.ca)) with any suggestions or concerns you may have, or just to say hi!

***Kathleen Fortune***

Hi everyone! My name is Kathleen Fortune and I am a 3rd year Ph.D. student in Social Psychology at the University of Manitoba. I'm broadly interested in stereotypes and social stigma. More specifically, I'm interested in the unique experiences faced by individuals who possess a concealable stigmatized identity. My current work examines the attributions people make for sexual orientation and the influence of having a gay friend or family member on social distancing and support for gay rights. This will be my first year serving as a member of the GSC and I look forward to hearing from you about how I can improve your graduate experience!

***Nicole Noll***

I am a 4th year PhD student at Temple University, in Philadelphia, where I am also completing a graduate certificate in Women's Studies. In my research, I take an embodied social cognition approach to understanding the interplay of cognition, language, attitudes, and behavior. Other areas of research interest include nonverbal behavior and system justification. I am looking forward to working with the Graduate Student Committee this year. I am particularly interested in diversity within the academy, and creating networks for interdisciplinary research and student-to-student mentoring. Please email me ([nnoll@temple.edu](mailto:nnoll@temple.edu)) if you have similar interests and would like to collaborate on these initiatives.

***Jennifer Pattershall***

Greetings! My name is Jen Pattershall, and I'm a third year doctoral student at the University of Arkansas. I have a variety of research interests that include political attitudes and ideology, affective forecasting, and social cognition more generally. This is my second term as a member-at-large for the SPSP GSC and I'm very excited to be back! It is truly an honor to work on behalf of the SPSP graduate student constituency. Together with the new members-at-large and president I hope that the upcoming year can be just as productive as the previous one! One of my primary concerns has been networking, and finding the best way to connect graduate students. I am glad that I will have another year to work toward this goal. I also hope to make some improvements to the Outstanding Research Award, and develop some new conference events and activities that will benefit all grad students. I'm looking forward to a productive year!

## President's Corner

As we recover from the excitement of SPSP 2009 and look forward to the beginning of summer productivity (and fun!), your 2008-2009 GSC reflects on the accomplishments of this year.

Aside from reconfiguring the FORUM page on the SPSP website, proposing a keywords organization system for poster sessions, and surveying those entering the job market and recently off the job market about their professional experiences, we doubled the size of our annual mentoring luncheon, promoted great research through the Outstanding Research Award and Student Poster Award, and created the GSC's official fanpage on Facebook. (In case you haven't spotted it yet, just search for "Official SPSP Graduate Student Committee Page" on Facebook.) All students are welcome to join, post on the Wall, start discussions, and add photos and videos. We created this for you, and we hope to see you on there!

In February, I met with the SPSP Executive Committee at the conclusion of the conference to make my President's report. You may have noticed that this year's conference had poster sessions organized by topics – many students commented on the difference! The executive officers are aware of the positives and the pitfalls of such a system and continue their commitment to structuring the conference in a reasonable way for all. Also, the Committee was pleased to hear about all the graduate student involvement at our events, and they were happy to think of ways the future SPSP conferences can help us. You'll hear more about this in the coming months!

We thank you all for your support, participation, and enthusiasm during our term! It was truly a fun-filled year of hard work, and the wonderful words of encouragement from you all made it satisfying and worthwhile. We were glad that many of you stopped by the GSC conference events to introduce yourselves and participate as well. It was exciting to see a lot of familiar names. Now, we hope you will welcome the 2009-2010 GSC and make your ideas and requests known to them. They are a capable group, ready to invent new ideas and make them happen.

As always, we can be reached at [spspgsc@yahoo.com](mailto:spspgsc@yahoo.com) and also on the GSC's Facebook fanpage! Thank you again for a wonderful year!

By Helen Lee Lin

## Wrap-Up of GSC Events at SPSP Tampa

The SPSP Graduate Student Committee sponsored several events at the 2009 conference in Tampa. Since the conference can be a busy time for everyone, here's a recap of the GSC events you may have missed.

The Outstanding Research Award Symposium took place bright and early on Friday morning. The four award winners kicked off the conference by presenting their research to an audience comprised of peers and faculty members. It was an exciting culmination to this year's award. Thank you again to all who submitted and reviewed – this award would not be possible without your involvement!

The Student Social Hour took place on Friday evening, providing grad students an opportunity to wind down from their first day

of conferencing and mingle with their peers. This year's social hour saw a significant increase in attendance. In addition to offering light refreshments, we had a wide selection of books to give away as prizes for correct answers to social and personality psychology trivia questions. We also raffled off ten "free drink" tickets to some lucky grad students. All of these prizes were made possible by generous donations from faculty members. We hope to see you at the social hour in Las Vegas next year!

The Mentoring Luncheon took place on both Friday and Saturday this year. This expansion doubled the available seats, allowing more student participation than ever before. Nearly all of the available seats were taken, attesting to the popularity of this event. Each table

featured a prominent faculty member discussing academic topics and professional issues. Some pictures of this event can be found on the SPSP GSC Facebook page. Thanks to all who participated, and to all of the mentors who graciously gave their time for the benefit of grad students!

This year also saw another GSC poster. We surveyed SPSP members who were either on the job market or had found their job within the last five years. Then we analyzed the factors that made the applicants successful. Thanks to all who stopped by the poster, but if you missed it you can email Helen Lin ([hlin@uh.edu](mailto:hlin@uh.edu)) for a copy!

The Student Poster Award also returned this year. Anonymous reviewers visited nominees during each poster session to evaluate

*Preparing for fall, cont.*

people who you know will write you a strong letter and will send it out on time. It is suggested that you ask these people several months ahead of time in order to give them enough time to write a good letter.

**Journal articles:** You may be asked to send a pre/re-print of 1 or more articles that you have authored. First authored articles and/or articles published in top tier journals will make the most positive impact. In addition, it would be a good idea to send articles that relate to the type of researcher the institution is looking for.

**CV:** Your CV should include information about your education history, publications, teaching experience, professional service, grants, professional affiliations, and honors/awards. See the Spring 2008 forum for tips on putting together a strong CV.

In closing, start compiling these documents now and give them to several faculty to review and give you feedback by the end of the semester. This way, over the summer you can work on finalizing them and you will be ready when job postings starting coming out in the fall. Good luck!

By Megan O'Grady

*GSC at SPSP, cont.*

nominees during each poster session to evaluate both the content of the poster and the presentation. There were a total of 21 winners this year – one first place winner and two honorable mentions at each poster session. Congratulations to this year's winners, and remember to submit your poster for next year's award!

The GSC strives to serve the graduate student constituency of SPSP, and one of the ways we accomplish this is by offering events and services during the annual conference. We hope you enjoyed this year's efforts, and would love

*Teaching statement, cont.*

teaching practices. Each paragraph should address the following questions:

*Paragraph 1:*

Why do you teach? Where do you get your passion for teaching?

*Paragraph 2:*

What techniques or practices do you use in the classroom to encourage student learning? Name one or two key assignments that you give your students that you think make the biggest impact upon their learning.

*Paragraph 3:*

How do you know your students are getting it? What evidence of learning might you present to a search committee?

*Paragraph 4:*

What aspects of your teaching are you working on now? What are the current learning problems your students are encountering, and how are you trying to ease that difficulty?

Some instructors find it useful to begin simply by looking at examples of others' philosophies. Sample statements from a variety of disciplines can be found at the website for the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at <<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/tstrategies/tstpts.php>>.

In their survey of search committee chairs, Meizlish and Kaplan (2007) found broad agreement on the desirable characteristics of a statement of teaching philosophy. Specifically, chairs described successful teaching statements as having the following characteristics:

- \*They want to see specific examples rather than vague references to educational jargon or formulaic statements.
- \*They convey reflectiveness. Candidates should be able to discuss their approach to instructional challenges and their plans for future pedagogical development.
- \* They communicate that teaching is valued.
- \* They are student- or learning-centered, attuned to differences in student abilities, learning styles, or levels.
- \* They are well-written, clear, and readable.

Beginning the statement of teaching philosophy is often the hardest part of writing one. Hopefully, answering the questions in the Four-Paragraph Model and looking at examples of others' statements of teaching philosophy will help you begin to reflect on your own philosophy of teaching. Best of luck!

By Greg Preuss

your feedback. If there is something you think we can do differently that would better serve grad students we would love to know! Thanks again for your support in Tampa!

By Jennifer Pattershall



