

The FORUM

The Newsletter of the SPSP Graduate Student Committee

Winter 2008

This issue of the FORUM is designed to prepare you for the quickly approaching SPSP conference. However you're planning to spend your days at SPSP, we've got you covered from pre-conferences to the closing address. To start, you should check out the summary of GSC-organized graduate student events. We've also done some research on Albuquerque which should help fill your non-conference hours with sight-seeing and nightlife. Inside, you will find tips on honing your networking skills, and information to dispel some of the mystery surrounding pre-conferences. We've even compiled a list of Dos and Don'ts for those attending the mentorship lunch. We hope this issue of the FORUM will help you plan for the conference and whet your appetite for the events to come. See you in Albuquerque!

Spotlight on Albuquerque: Grad Student Guide to Experiencing SPSP

By Megan O'Grady

In between poster presentations, symposiums, and networking at the upcoming SPSP conference in Albuquerque, you will not want to miss exploring this authentic Southwestern city. Albuquerque offers several distinct neighborhoods with plenty of interesting food, cocktail, and nightlife options. The region also offers some exciting cultural and outdoor activities.

First, you need to know how to get around. The convention center is located in the heart of downtown, and is within walking distance of the Downtown neighborhood. The D-RIDE bus (route #40) travels a loop around downtown Albuquerque, providing service to some of the area's most popular destinations. It runs every seven minutes from 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and picks up right in front of the convention center area. The best thing about the D-RIDE is that it is free! Albuquerque also has a regular bus system (ABQ Ride) that runs throughout the city at the cost of \$1 per ride. There is a 3-day pass available for \$4 which will be the

best value if you plan to ride the bus a few times. Cabs are also available for transportation throughout the city.

Joshua Tybur, a graduate student at the University of New Mexico, recommends the Downtown and Nob Hill neighborhoods to graduate students looking for exciting nightlife. The convention center is located in Albuquerque's Downtown neighborhood, making this a convenient area to head to with your fellow conference attendees. There are many bars and restaurants in this area.

Tybur highly recommends the Nob Hill area to grad students looking for an area with an older crowd (e.g., less undergraduate oriented) that is less crowded than downtown locations. Nob Hill is located near the University of New Mexico and is about 3 miles from downtown. You can get there by taking the rapid ride bus line that runs along Central Ave. (Bus route #766 Rapid Ride Red Line). It is about a 5 minute ride. Nob Hill is described as a vibrant city district with locally-owned establishments.

Another option is Albuquerque's

Continued on page 4

Taking the Work Out of Networking

By Elizabeth Lee

The SPSP conference is a giant gathering of social and personality psychologists and the grad students who want to be them. In order to achieve our goal of leaving grad school with those prized letters after our name, one aspect of our training involves networking. For many of us, the prospect of networking seems risky, which is why this article seeks to demystify certain aspects of networking to help you realize that it does not have to be such an ordeal.

First, you have to have a ready mindset since you want to be prepared for the unexpected. Some attendees are well-known, successful professors who may someday be your collaborator, your supervisor, your department colleague, or even your friend, but remember that they are just as human and socially awkward as we are. Thus, if you approach networking as if you are chatting with a colleague already in-

Continued on page 3

Student Events at SPSP

By Jennifer Knack

Get ready to head to Albuquerque this February! The SPSP GSC is happy to announce several events geared specifically toward graduate students. From the graduate student poster awards to the mentorship lunch to the GSC symposium to the social hour, you should be able to find an event that piques your interest! We hope you will join us at one or more of these events.

GSC Social Hour: We will be hosting the second annual Graduate Student Social hour this year on Friday night from 6:00 – 7:30pm. The Social Hour will be a great opportunity for you to meet other graduate students and the GSC board

members. There will be a cash bar and finger foods available. In addition, we will be offering some prizes throughout the night (e.g., free student memberships). Check your conference program for the location and be sure to stop by to mingle before going out on the town!

GSC Symposium: This year we are pleased to host the first annual Graduate Student Symposium. Early in the Fall semester we invited graduate students to submit abstracts based on original research they have conducted. We also invited graduate students to serve as peer reviewers. These reviewers helped select four finalists who will present their re-

search in a symposium to be held on Friday from 8:15 – 9:30am during the special sessions time. Be sure to check your conference program for the location. Come support your fellow graduate students as they present their research!

Mentor Lunch: We have an exciting mentorship lunch planned for Saturday from 1:00 – 2:00pm (see the conference schedule for the location). This event provides an opportunity for students to meet intimately with successful researchers in the field. Through informal discussions, students will be able

Continued on page 3

Preconferences Explained

By David Portnoy

Ahh...SPSP two days chock full of Social and Personality Psychology dawn to dusk. However if you are just going to the two days of the conference, you're missing out. The first day of the conference, this year Thursday February 7th, is when pre-conferences are held. That's right - a conference within a conference. So what are these pre-conferences? For the majority of the 13 pre-conferences being offered at SPSP in Albuquerque, they are an opportunity to devote an entire day (usually 8:30 to 4:30) to one subject area. They range from broad to narrow in focus, and while most are focused on a content area, there are often a few that focus on teaching a special skill set. For example, this year there is a pre-conference devoted solely to teaching social and personality psychology, and another devoted to introducing Neuroscience research techniques.

Pre-conferences provide a great opportunity for students in a number of ways. While they are often run like a day-long symposium, pre-conferences are all relatively small, which gives you a better chance of making connections with other researchers studying similar things. Also, their size allows for more in depth questions after talks. Second, some pre-conferences have their own mini poster sessions or time for informal discussions. These provide an opportunity to get your poster seen by people who do similar research and bounce ideas off of some of the leading researchers in that area.

Third, pre-conferences can provide a great introduction to a new area of research. Because most pre-conference are focused on one area, it will be much easier to see the connections between the talks and ideas,

something that is often hard to do when learning about a new area. By attending a pre-conference that is on a topic outside of your research (but maybe related) it can inspire new research or allow you to see how your research fits into the whole of Social/Personality Psychology better.

While pre-conferences are an extra cost (most have registration fees from \$50-75), they are well worth it. Perhaps the best thing about pre-conferences is making connections with faculty and other students: many a collaboration has been formed at them. If this is your first time attending SPSP and you didn't register for a pre-conference, ask around to see which ones may interest you for next year.

Networking continued

terested in the research interests you have, this might help you feel more confident talking about your projects. Furthermore, networking can partly be seen as a test of your powers of observation, reminiscent of the skills needed for “Where’s Waldo?” In a “Where’s Waldo?” book, you scan a picture full of people trying to find Waldo under the assumption that you know what he will look like, but will probably find him somewhere unexpected. Lots of networking opportunities are fleeting and spontaneous, so get set to people watch as you go around to different talks until you find someone to approach. Making professional connections can be helpful in getting jobs, initiating collaborations, increasing knowledge, and standing out above the researchers in your area. A lot of these benefits may seem like things only advanced students distributing their business cards need to worry about. Actually, any grad student should be thinking about getting comfortable with networking. In some ways, being a junior student is the best time to try networking since you would have much less to lose than a 5th year student hoping to impress a potential post-doc supervisor.

One approach is to meet other grad students, especially at poster sessions, because the purpose of these sessions is for people to converse. Networking with grad students is not only fun, but also helpful for all the same reasons why you socialize with your departmental peers. Those who network like a pro might possess a generous level of tact and charisma, but plenty of professors who have the respect of their colleagues did not get to that position simply by having a wide arsenal of witty jokes. There are some practical ways to prepare before attending the conference. Look through the schedule and pick out talks you

want to hear, posters you want to view, and people you want to chat with. Having a question you can ask multiple people is useful so that you do not have to keep thinking of questions on the spot. Lastly, practice giving a brief, interesting description of your research, because you probably will not have a captive audience for a long period of time. Once you are actually at the conference, there are plenty of strategies for initiating introductions. Your advisor or an advisee of the professor you would like to meet can help you start a conversation with someone. Regarding advisees you have just gotten acquainted with, it is always beneficial for you to reciprocate introductions too. Also, while having a mingling buddy might make social hours more bearable, some advise not hanging around your grad student friends all the time. Lastly, if you are feeling bold, turn to the person sitting next to you or go up to someone and introduce yourself. Working yourself to a confidence level where you can smoothly introduce yourself and chat about research can yield huge rewards.

Some last advice is regarding appropriate attire. Most attendees wear business clothing, but there is a range of casualness. A good rule of thumb is to pack multiple options since you would want to be ready for unforeseen weather or unexpected spills anyway. Also, there is nothing wrong with over rather than under-dressing for an event. Looking overly casual can give the impression that you are not professional and not taking the conference seriously. Ultimately, do not over think what you are going to wear, because professional attire can only do so much when making impressions on people. Just be neat, clean, and unwrinkled, and always wear your badge. You can benefit from networking regardless of what stage you are in

grad school. Often, it takes multiple interactions with someone anyway before he or she remembers you. While it is easy to feel like you do not have to worry about networking yet, anything you can do to gradually become more comfortable is a step in the right direction. Networking does become a self-rewarding activity; every time you engage in it, you will improve, hopefully have some fun, and meet some great people along the way!

Student events continued

to discuss various research interest topics such as self-regulation, personality, sexuality, culture/ethnicity, applied social psychology, and goal pursuit, among other research topics. Other students will be discussing professional development topics such as publications, collaborations, and social/personality psychology in the business world. Registration for this event has already taken place. Be sure you have signed up with the student listserv at <http://www.spsp.org/student/> so you do not miss out on other student-gear events!

Graduate Poster Award: The Graduate Poster Award is returning to SPSP for the 6th year. Just before Winter break, students were invited to enter their research posters to be eligible for this award. (Be sure to sign-up for the student listserv at <http://www.spsp.org/student/> so you do not miss out on other student-gear events!). During the regularly scheduled poster sessions, students who entered will be interviewed by “secret” judges. These judges will then decide on the top posters for each poster sessions. We hope to see you at one or more of these events! See you in Albuquerque!

President's Corner *By Elizabeth Lee*

The start of a new year can signal many things: establishing a new year's resolution, dispelling last year's demons, and for social and personality psychologists, anticipating the SPSP conference. It is my hope that anyone reading this is already planning to attend and, especially if this year will be your first time, I am glad you are making this important step in your grad school career. Conferences are a mix of business and pleasure; while surrounded by professors and listening to a bunch of talks, you can expect to at least somewhat enjoy yourself even though your brain is filled to capacity.

The conference's huge schedule is always overwhelming, even for those who have attended before, so the key is being prepared. Before the conference, much grief is prevented by mapping out your schedule. If you find there are two interesting talks with conflicting times, see if a peer who can fill you in later is going. You will be sure to find the work of ___ (insert name of professor you cite all the time) ___ being presented that will stimulate your curiosity and possibly trigger a good question to ask. That is the beauty of how conferences nourish our research and socialize us to be successful psychologists.

Despite the many offerings at the conference, you should also take time to enjoy yourself outside the conference. On the GSC's website (www.spsp.org/student), you will find a link to conference information. While there, you should again check out the events we are hosting (better yet take this copy of the FORUM with you to Albuquerque!), but also scroll down for the link on things to do in Albuquerque. We provide suggestions for where to go to decompress from the hustle and bustle of the confer-

ence. Being in a novel setting might just be the change you need in order to recover from the holiday break and to unleash those ingenious insights.

Whether you are eager or hesitant about attending, there is no reason why you cannot have a pleasant time. Sightsee, cram five friends in a hotel double, gorge at social hours, meet new grad students, network with professors, be inspired, and present your work in a poster or talk. February 7th is not only the first day of the conference when the pre-conferences are underway, but

Spotlight on Albuquerque cont.

Old Town, but Tybur warns that this area may be a little pricier than Nob Hill and Downtown. Old Town is about 1 mile from the convention center area and has many shops and restaurants. Old Town is home to museums, galleries and the Albuquerque Biological Park (houses an Aquarium, Zoo, Botanic Gardens, and Beach) for those looking for a little culture or nature. You can also take a walking tour from Downtown to Old Town where you can learn about the history and architecture of the city.

If you are looking for outdoor activities, the Sandia Mountains lie northeast of Albuquerque. The mountains are home to the Sandi Peak Ariel Tramway and Ski Area. This is outside of town, so you will need a cab or car to get there. The tramway is the world's longest aerial tramway and provides beautiful views of the Cibola National Forest as it takes you up to almost 11,000 feet. There are also ski hills and hiking trails located here (accessible depending on the weather, the ski hills are currently open Wednesday through Sunday).

Tybur give those of us who are not familiar with Albuquerque some helpful tips. First, Albuquerque is

also the lunar calendar's New Year's Day for the year of the rat. Here is some info you can chat about if you find yourself stuck with someone you have no idea what to say to. Those born in the year of the rat (1996, 1984, 1972, etc.) are considered hardworking, ambitious, and adaptable. Because the rat is the first sign of the Chinese zodiac, this year signifies an excellent time for new ideas, plans and opportunities. So best wishes for a new year full of happy conferencing, renewal, and progress!

very spread out, the best bet is to use the Rapid Ride bus line or D-RIDE, but it may be tough to get around to all the different areas of town without a car. Second, Albuquerque can potentially be quite cold during February (high temps may not get above 40 degrees during the day and below 10 degrees at night) and there may be snow and wind with windy days being much colder. However, the weather does have the potential to be more moderate (50 degrees during the day and 20 degrees at night), so it is best to bring clothing for a variety of weather conditions. Third, Albuquerque recently banned smoking indoors. Finally, Albuquerque is broken into 4 quadrants (SE, NW, NE, NW), and the convention center is very close to the middle of these quadrants.

Please see the following links on the GSC website for more info about conference travel, GSC events, helpful links, and restaurant/bar recommendations.

<http://www.spsp.org/student/travinfo.htm>

<http://www.spsp.org/student/thingsinabq.htm>

Have fun exploring Albuquerque!

Dos and Don'ts to Make the Mentor Lunch Enjoyable For All

By Lavonia Smith-LeBeau

As the Mentor Lunch coordinator for SPSP 2006 & 2007, I volunteered to offer some advice (based on feedback from previous mentor lunch participants) for making the most of your mentor lunch experience. So, here are my top 3 dos and don'ts for the SPSP 2008 Mentor Lunch.

Do come prepared to speak up and ask questions.

Don't expect the mentor to lecture or carry the discussion.

The Mentors who participate in these events have graciously agreed to spend some of their precious conference time with graduate students. In exchange for their generosity they are specifically told not to prepare and to expect an informal discussion over lunch. Thus, graduate student participants should come prepared to talk, with broad questions or ideas they would like to share.

Do feel free to share personal research or professional development experiences.

Don't bring your dissertation proposal and expect the mentor to act as a surrogate committee member.

It is exciting to have the attention of someone whose work you greatly admire, but it's important to remember that it is not all about you. You should not dominate the conversation or the mentor's time. However, this is a networking opportunity, so do feel free to inquire about whether the mentor would be interested in a one on one meeting with you at another time.

Do keep in mind that the other graduate students sitting at your table are going to be your future colleagues.

Don't carry on side conversations with your new found collaborator.

Your fellow mentor lunch participants are likely to be reading your future journal submissions and grant proposals and could be potential collaborators. Thus, it is worthwhile to dedicate some of your attention to what they have to contribute to the conversation. Again, this is a networking opportunity, so do exchange email addresses or set up future meetings with those you meet at the lunch.

The 2007-2008 Graduate Student Committee

President

Elizabeth Lee, Pennsylvania State Univ., eal178@psu.edu

Members-at-Large

Sonia Kang, Univ. of Toronto, sonia.kang@utoronto.ca

Jennifer Knack, Univ. of Texas at Arlington, knack@uta.edu

Megan O'Grady, Colorado State Univ.,
mogrady@lamar.colostate.edu

David Portnoy, Univ. of Connecticut,
David.Portnoy@uconn.edu

Past President

John Edlund, Northern Illinois University, jedlund@niu.edu

The 2008-2009 Graduate Student Committee

President

Helen Lee Lin, University of Houston, hlin@uh.edu

Members-at-Large

Sonia Kang, Univ. of Toronto, sonia.kang@utoronto.ca

Megan O'Grady, Colorado State Univ.,
mogrady@lamar.colostate.edu

Jennifer Pattershall, Univ. of Maine,
jennifer_pattershall@umit.maine.edu

Greg Preuss, Ohio University, Gp311205@ohio.edu

Past President

Elizabeth Lee, Pennsylvania State Univ., eal178@psu.edu