

Congratulations to This Year's Outstanding Student Teacher Award Winners!



Samantha Wagner, M.S. I am a fourth-year graduate student working in the Center for Transdisciplinary Research on Intimate Relationships and currently preparing my dissertation and internship applications. Both my clinical and research interests include system's level work, with a particular emphasis on couples' functioning. Clinically, I am inclined towards using attachment frameworks to encourage healthier relationships for intimate partners, family members, or individual clients. My research focuses on the function of physical affection on health outcomes and has been supported by a Psi Chi Graduate Fellowship and recognized for Honorable Mention through the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship. For my dissertation, I am building off my prior research on attachment, touch, and marital outcomes, and am exploring the role of touch and hormones associated with touch (e.g. oxytocin) on mental and physical health outcomes in couples. My teaching experience

includes six different teaching assistantships, independently teaching Statistical Analysis and Design, and continual mentorship of undergraduate research assistants in the lab. I will also teach Stats this summer. Prior to the SSCP teaching award, I was awarded a Binghamton University Graduate Teaching Award and a Departmental Commendation of Excellence in recognition of excellence in teaching, clinical work, course work, and research.

1. What are your teaching interests and/or teaching philosophy?

The ultimate goal of my teaching is to provide students with skills to become self-motivated and engaged learners who find knowledge throughout their world. I strive to teach in ways that allow students to experience mastery of material and apply relevant information to their own world, rather than simply obtain A's on examinations. For example, I feel it is important to recognize individual differences in motivation and expectations. I follow lectures with group work to capitalize on student collaboration to solve difficult problems and solidify material. I also use individual assignments and participation for students to showcase their material mastery while allowing me to gauge understanding. Each course I design incorporates many modalities to assess success. By placing less emphasis on one assignment, students are able to struggle in areas of the course and still succeed.

I have found that a balance between caring and independence fosters a reciprocal relationship, motivating students to engage in their work and become self-motivated learners. I create this balance by being accessible for one-on-one meetings to discuss material or ways to work harder, and do not require class attendance. Although I want all students to become self-motivated learners, I feel it is important to allow students to decide their own priorities, emphasizing a broader lesson of independence. Overall, in teaching I model enthusiasm and respect for learning, while also acknowledging students "where they are at" in hopes of motivating them to become consumers of science who apply knowledge learned to their world.

2. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

What I enjoy most about teaching is watching a student become excited about a particular topic or lesson, especially one that the student had preconceived notions about, such as "I am bad at Math and will therefore never understand statistics." I feel that my work as a clinician influences how I approach students in giving them autonomy, accepting them where they are, and motivating them to want to learn. School is not meant to be easy, but even the most challenging classes can be rewarding. Watching a student have that "Aha!" moment where challenge meets reward is by far the best part of teaching.

3. Who are/have been your mentor(s) or other influences on your teaching?

All of my experiences with mentors have influenced and guided my teaching. However, the two biggest academic influencers on my teaching are my undergraduate and graduate mentors, Dr. Jennifer Lodi-Smith and Dr. Richard Mattson, respectively. Both mentors take a supportive and individually tailored approach to mentoring. I've learned a lot about setting expectations, providing supportive and constructive feedback, and helping provide guidance. The most important thing each of them has given me though, is lending me their confidence that I can do something challenging even when I'm not as certain that I can. I try to bring this to my students because sometimes borrowing someone else's faith is all it takes to motivate you. That being said, the absolute biggest influencers of my teaching are my parents who taught me that learning is more important than an A, and that "If you fumble the ball, you pick it up and keep running," which is my dad's football metaphor that means messing up doesn't mean failure, it means you start where you left off and keep trying. I try to instill that in my students and mentees.

4. What advice would you give to other students pursuing their graduate degree?

I want to start with the realities of the situation: pursuing a graduate degree is hard work, you will meet challenges that knock you down or set you back, and there will be days when you're just not certain... of anything. It will also be a time where you see unbelievable growth in yourself, your mind, and your knowledge, if you let it. That being said, this is my advice to students pursuing a graduate degree: 1) It is not for everyone and that is ok. You don't have to get a Ph.D. to be successful (even in Psychology). It's hard enough being a graduate student when you love it. I can't imagine doing it if I didn't. 2) A mentor match is imperative to a positive graduate school experience, so think about this while you are applying. There are many faculty that I deeply respect and value while also recognizing that if they were my primary mentor, I would not be happy. 3) Find something that you enjoy that is also completely unrelated to school. Self-care and remembering that you are a whole person, not just a student, is important. I find it hard to carve out this time entirely on my own, so I take a pottery class. Paying for the class motivates me to go and holds me accountable.



Sarah Blakely-McClure, M.A. I grew up in St Catharines, ON. I received my undergraduate degree from McMaster University in Hamilton and will receive my PhD from the University at Buffalo Clinical Psychology PhD program in Buffalo, NY after completing my clinical internship at CAMH in Toronto. I will be an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Canisius College starting in August 2019. My research interests are related to the development of the self, aggression, and victimization and future associations with maladaptive outcomes in young children. I am particularly interested in relational aggression (the use of the relationship as the vehicle of harm) and relational victimization. My training has been grounded in a developmental psychopathology framework, which has helped me understand the importance of early intervention. As such, I am interested in pursuing research that helps us to understand these early processes and the development of psychopathology, in order to inform the development of effective child and adolescent interventions. My clinical interests include work with children and their families who

are experiencing challenges with disruptive behavior disorders or anxiety disorders. My teaching interests include but are not limited to developmental psychology, special topics courses in child and adolescent psychology, developmental psychopathology, abnormal child psychology, social cognition, as well as aggression and violence.

1. What are your teaching interests and/or teaching philosophy?

I would not say I have one teaching interest. However, I have a passion for teaching students about research. It was through my own learning experience which I developed a love for research. I am passionate about my

chosen discipline, and want to entrust this desire to my students. I hope to engage students, and disseminate psychological research in and outside of the classroom. My goal is to create an atmosphere where students learn by confronting new topics, identifying problems, and developing questions. I trust that students want to learn and it is my job to nurture that desire and help them reach their goals. I also strive to create a classroom not filled with just my own voice, but rather a room of critical and thoughtful students' voices. I endeavor to push students to explore options for their future and not let fear or lack of confidence hold them back.

2. What do you enjoy most about teaching?

The thing I enjoy most about teaching is the discussions I have with students. I encourage students to ask questions in class and to attend my office hours to assist with clarifying concepts and have deeper discussion about the course content. These communications are not limited to course related material and I enjoy helping students find value in what their personal experiences, background, and opinions bring to discussion of course content. Teaching students constantly challenges me to grow and learn and expand my perspective, which I hope then in turn helps me to assist others learn, grow, and find their own paths.

3. Who are/have been your mentor (s) or other influences on your teaching?

No one experience has shaped my views on teaching. Rather, a plethora of opportunities and individuals have molded my teaching and mentoring philosophy. At the beginning of my graduate studies at the University at Buffalo I was provided with the opportunity to study college teaching under Dr. Julie Bowker. Through this experience, I was taught the importance of evidence-based learning, as well as reflection. By engaging actively in the reflection process about my own experiences as a student, TA, and as a course instructor, I realized that I connected most to learning when my instructors were friendly, open, and enthusiastic. I have drawn from these experiences and modeled my own instructional approach to align with this style.

4. What advice would you give other students pursuing their graduate degree?

Try and identify your longer-term career goals. Once you do this learn to say NO to some opportunities that do not serve your longer-term goals. As a graduate student it is hard to say no to the many opportunities that arise. However, by saying no it will allow you to focus more on your own work related to your goals, allow for more opportunities for doing work that is more in line with your goals, as well as help you find balance when in graduate school (i.e., getting rest).