



Graduate Student Newsletter

Fall 2016

On Your Radar

- ❖ The **2016-2017 Mike Troy Graduate Student Scholarship** is due November 1st. There will be two \$1,000 scholarships awarded to individuals who are pursuing a Master's Degree in School Counseling from an accredited Wisconsin university! Check on this link for more information on eligibility and how to apply:
http://www.wscaweb.org/index.php?module=cms&page=236#.V_aLJPArKM-
- ❖ **WSCA Graduate Student Committee Meeting #2**: Sunday, November 13th from 9:30 – 11:30 am. Check with your school's WSCA Graduate Student Representative for more information on how to get involved! You can attend our meetings virtually! Just email Holly and Amy!
- ❖ The **2017 WSCA Conference** is approaching quickly! Don't forget to register! If you volunteer for 4 hours, your conference registration fee is waived! (Not including pre-conference.) Contact Amy Sylvester-Knudtson (SylvesteAM19@uww.edu) to sign up!

Co-Coordinator's Corner

Welcome fellow graduate students! Can you believe another year has begun! The summer loving of beach days, bonfires, and road trips have come and gone! I hope that everyone is starting to get into the groove of another school year, whether that means class, practicum, or internship. I would like to offer a welcome and congratulations to each and every one of you for either completing another year of graduate school or even to those who are just beginning your journeys of a whirlwind of learning!

Holly and I are working hard to understand our roles as the Graduate Student Co-Coordinator for WSCA and we are hoping to continue to set high expectations and goals for ourselves and for our committee! One of our goals is to ensure that our committee members, fellow graduate students, and ourselves are continuing to get the professional development that we as graduate students need. We hope to stay current in the trends that are effecting our students and school counselors within our realm of expertise. One way we hope to continue this goal is to have knowledgeable guest speakers present on topics and themes that are important to the school counseling field such as:

Academic and Career Planning, Ethics, and Multicultural Counseling.

Each of the schools with counseling programs within our state are able to have representatives in our Graduate Student Committee if you would like to get more involved, we encourage you to reach out to us at our contact information below. Additionally, we are collecting data to ensure that we are meeting our goals for our committee and promoting topics that are relevant within our field. If you would like to provide your personal information and feedback to Holly and I, please feel free to fill out our google form: <https://goo.gl/DzRKXM>.

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Multicultural Counseling - Not What I Expected

When I was first introduced to multicultural counseling, I thought of it as mostly for counselors working in inner city schools with minority students. As I learn more about this, I realize it is so much more than that. It's working with students from different ethnic backgrounds, religions, gender, ability and more. It's taking the time to understand that the angry kid who seems to not care about school is just trying to survive in a poverty-stricken community. It's appreciating that not all students celebrate Christian holidays and may be frustrated that their religious observances are not included. It's helping a student's family get the help and resources they need to aid their child with autism. Even greater than all of that is understanding that we are all cultural beings with different backgrounds and identities, no one greater than another.

It is our responsibility as school counselors to not only educate ourselves and appreciate these cultural differences, but also to advocate for our students. Being an ally for cultural groups other than your own is the best way to bring various groups together and empower each other. We must stand up and confront cultural biases head-on. It is no doubt that this will be uncomfortable,

frustrating, heartbreaking, and a seemingly never-ending battle. But it will also be humbling, inspiring and rewarding. This advocacy will help our students in their daily battles and also establish trust between counselors, students, their families and communities.

Multiculturalism is a relatively new focus in counseling and the resources are ever-changing. *Counseling the Culturally Diverse* (Sue & Sue) has been a great resource for diving into multicultural counseling. This book presents an open and honest approach to the complexities of multicultural competency in counseling. I would recommend this book for not only students but any educator looking to become more culturally aware and sensitive. This book has challenged me in many unexpected ways and I am confident I will approach school counseling with a more open mind and heart.

Brittany Bandle
UW-Milwaukee Representative
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Taking Time to Pause

Not only is this my first year as a student in my graduate school program, but also my first 3 months on the job as a College Success Coach for the Boys & Girls Club. My job, in short, is to work with low income, first generation, and minority college students from Madison, WI, to help them succeed in earning their college degree. This can mean anything from: helping to fill out the FAFSA (which is how most of this week has been spent), to checking in academically, socially, and emotionally, to helping students explore career plans and options. Additionally, because it is 2016, much of my work relies on checking Facebook, which is most of my students' chosen method of communication, when not in person.

Here's what I've learned: while we can read, and study, and attend professional development workshops, nothing compares to the real experience of working with at-risk students. That relies on your soft skills- how you listen, how you react, how you work one on one with students. My first meeting with a student was terrifying and an overwhelming test of my confidence. Three months in, some meetings still do. I have learned that most of all, the students need someone to hear them out, even if you do not have the right thing to respond with. Isn't that what we all want?

The biggest challenge for me, as a type-A, goal-oriented perfectionist, who, most days as a child, preferred keeping my nose in a book to the burden of meeting new people, has been communicating effectively. The biggest piece of this is taking time to pause, asking a student a question, and then *waiting* for their response. As a nervous talker and as the person of power in these situations, I rely on attempting to fill the gap of silence with explanations, or further questions. I worry, in those split seconds, that maybe I asked the question wrong or maybe the student will not know how to respond. But not giving that student the chance to pause means eventually, they will let me start talking for them. They will rely on my "this or that" questions and explanations

to fill in the blanks, and choose from the options I give them rather than forming their own response.

The pause also helps when I don't think I've gotten the full answer, or the right answer. Eventually, my same anxious responsibility to fill the silence will encourage the student to do so instead. This allows the student to take charge of the conversation, which is the real goal. This sounds obvious, but for me, this has been the biggest challenge thus far. When checking in with students, it is so easy for me to rush through the conversation, to take the burden off of them to fill the silence and place it on myself. I think, however, that given the opportunity, we all just want to be heard by someone who cares.

The pause also applies, less literally, to the day to day stress of such a demanding job. Of course, we are in it for the students. But there are always more demands: to log data, to plan for improvements, to attend meetings and workshops, and to catch up on emails. Some days, it might mean choosing between two students – who needs it most, and most immediately? That is not always an easy answer. It is tempting to stay late, staring at my computer screen, clicking around while trying to remember where I should actually focus my energy. My goal, this month, is to remind myself to pause, and remember what my priority is each hour of every day.

I'll end on a positive note. Yes, this job is incredibly challenging. If you don't cry at least once a month, you're stronger than me. However, the reward of seeing a student's face light up when you bring them a care package, or hearing that they would not be in college without you, is indescribable, and gets you through each and every day. It's amazing, and something I know we will all get to experience, even on the worst days.

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Five Ways to Get Involved with WSCA

- ❖ Join a committee
- ❖ Do a poster presentation at the WSCA Conference
 - ❖ Volunteer at the WSCA Conference
- ❖ Read our newsletters (Counselink or Grad Student Newsletter!)
- ❖ Meet with your school's graduate student representatives to learn more about WSCA

Graduate Student Poster Presentations

Are you looking for a way to get more involved with WSCA, one way to network with other professionals is to share the amazing learning you have done with other school counselors through a poster presentation! All applications are due **January 6th, 2017**. Please email Amy Sylvester-Knudtson at SylvesteAM19@uww.edu for a submission form or check with your school representative!

Why do a poster presentation?

- Great opportunity to network
- Contributes to volunteer hours required to waive registration fees
- Looks great on a resume
- You become the expert on your topic
- You get to highlight and show off your hard work to interested professionals

What kinds of projects can I present?

- Creative class projects or learning opportunities
- Original compilations of resources or information
- Collaborative or independent research
- Curriculum design
- Hot topics in counseling
- Other ideas that might appeal to the profession of school counseling or graduate students

Professional posters use the following guidelines:

- Include:
 - The title of your poster
 - The author(s),
 - A selected references section (your most important 2-3 references)
 - Graphics - pictures, diagrams, figures, tables, etc. - these are usually more eye-catching and understandable than text
- Condense! You cannot possibly present everything you know on the topic in that small space!!
- Include only your important points, and use bullets rather than a paragraph format; complete sentences are not required.
- The most common error is including too much information - RESIST!!
- Use larger section headings to help the casual reader quickly understand the poster's format.