From presenting at the annual Louisiana Counseling Association Conference in New Orleans to participating in presentations in Ireland, from teaching at LSU-S to teaching in Paris, France, my road to becoming a Licensed Professional Counselor has been more akin to a hair-raising pass on an amusement park ride than the hum-drum of classes and coursework I first envisioned.

As a volunteer at the Pool of Siloam Free Medical Clinic, my interest in counseling began to outweigh my interest in medicine when patient after patient became treatment-compliant only after counseling interventions. Neither horrific prognosis nor cynical predictions from the medical team changed patient behavior as effectively as real investigation into motivations for getting better and for staying sick. The Master of Science in Counseling Psychology (MSCP) program gave me the tools to launch and complete that investigation with optimal results.

In addition to coursework, my weekly agenda over the first two years of the program included research on topics relevant to me: posttraumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, military issues, and health compliance issues to name a few. The courses are designed to build on each other, offering an opportunity to expand on previous research with each subsequent class. Paralleling the research (Continued on page 2)

Sooo… here you are again, 15 years later, doing the school thing again? Where do you begin? You made it through studying for the GRE. That was fun (when was the last time that you actually found the area of a triangle??) But you did it! You made it through the application process with all the transcript requests, financial aid paperwork, yada-yada-yada. And now you’re here. Now what?

Relax. Here are some things to remember:
- You aren’t the only one. You might be surprised to find that many other students in your program are also nontraditional. As you have the chance to talk with them, you’ll discover that many of them are also dealing with working long hours, financial struggles, and trying to carve out time for family and studying.
- There are resources available to help you. Choose a financial aid counselor and deal with that person each time you have a question. Find out if there is a nontraditional student association or group at your school. Get the phone numbers of classmates in case you have a homework (Continued on page 4)
MSCP: It’s Not Just a Program...It’s an Adventure! Continued

aspect is a clinical experience that allowed me to “try on” different therapeutic styles. Mock counseling sessions and case vignettes are a core component of several courses. My practicum/internship experience at an inpatient psychiatric hospital further developed my skills of assessment and counseling in both group and individual settings.

I found that the computer listing of classes required for the MSCP just scratched the surface in regard to what I was exposed to. My training included the basics, but through extensive networking, seminars, and other opportunities, I was also able to study art and impact therapy, holistic treatments, animal assisted therapy, interpersonal neurobiology, play therapy, and the impact of psychological states on the economy.

This experience comes to a close for me during a time of instability and unrest both in the profession and in the overall fiscal condition of the nation. In spite of these obstacles, I move forward with confidence and integrity, knowing that my contributions not only affect future clients, but also impact the profession of counseling worldwide.

By Janet L. Wisinger

Suicide Prevention

Suicide is a community health problem that affects thousands of lives every year. Removing the secrecy of suicide and allowing for an open and honest conversation about this important issue is the first step to creating an environment of healing for those grappling with suicide. Most people who attempt suicide have an underlying problem, such as depression. Over 60% of people who complete suicide suffer from this highly treatable illness. As mental health professionals, knowledge, skills, and awareness of this problem is a necessity.

Many times a person contemplating suicide can be helped greatly by knowing that they have a support system and someone with whom they can confide. By letting people know they have someone who is willing to listen without judgment or shock can be crucial to easing the individual out of the crisis.

How to get involved: The Northwest Louisiana Suicide Prevention Coalition Conference is to be held May 13, 2011 at the LSUS University Center. This is a great way to get involved for those interested in learning more about suicide awareness and prevention. The conference will include a range of speakers to present many important topics pertaining to suicide. To learn more or register go to www.ce.lsus.edu (type “suicide” in the search box). Another great way to get involved is the Out of the Darkness walk held every year all around the country. Sponsored by the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, this walk is held to increase awareness and promote suicide prevention held to honor those who have been lost to suicide. For more information visit outofthedarkness.org.

By Jennifer Graham

"Thought is action in rehearsal." -Sigmund Freud
Counseling at our Alma Mater!!

I never thought about college counseling until Dr. Nelson asked me to contact Paula Atkins, LPC at the LSUS Counseling Center. At LSUS, Kate and I do a lot of academic advising along with more common types of counseling. For example, we get a lot of students who do not know what they want to do with their lives...so the session starts out with us talking about what they like, what they are interested in, how they chose their major, etc. The sessions eventually turn into their issues with family, stress, relationships, and anxiety. I actually really like it! I enjoy the laid back type environment and how easily I can connect with the students. Technically, I still am a student myself so I can relate.

I also intern at a Neurology clinic where I do a lot of clinical and DSM type of work and sometimes counseling at LSUS can be completely different. It is hard at times to switch back and forth from diagnosing rather than working through, discussing, and goal setting.

As an LSUS counselor, I would say my biggest weakness right now would be my lack of knowledge of campus resources. No matter how much empathy or people skills I have, I am still not as familiar with this campus as I should be. With time and networking I will be better though.

Another frustration I am having is trying to start focus groups on university grounds. Kate and I both do separate focus groups. My group is an "Academic Support Group." It is really for anyone suffering with test anxiety, school related anxiety, or could benefit from time management skills, study skills, note taking skills, etc. I was disappointed when no one showed up after the first two times. Students had performed well on one test and never came back. We have put out a million and five flyers around campus and I know students who would really benefit from this group. Hopefully I will be able to kick-start it off the ground again soon!

We are also trying to begin a student organization called "Active Minds." It is this great program that focuses on student mental health. There is such a stigma to "go to counseling" or really anything to do with mental health. In society today, I honestly feel that students are more likely to disclose an STD that they contracted that weekend before telling anyone they are feeling depressed or have an eating.

-Barb Pilat

“Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves.”
-Carl Jung

Counseling at Centenary College

When I started my (extremely time consuming) internship at Centenary College, I thought I would see “normal” student problems; such as boyfriend issues, family drama, and professor concerns. I was only partially correct. All of the issues I expected were part of my daily experiences, but they were overshadowed by greater, more interesting incidents; for instance, observing someone dissociate, counseling someone with agoraphobia, and hospitalizing clients with severe depression.

Sometimes I wondered why I was seeing such diverse psychopathology in these high-achieving, young adults. I learned that ADA laws are making it a lot easier for students with disabilities to make it into college. In addition, because of the economy, a lot of colleges are desperate to enroll students, so admissions standards are becoming lower. No matter the reason for this diversity, I’m glad for the experience.

By Ariel Ferguson
The Master of Science in Counseling Psychology program is designed to develop professional counselors and to prepare students for further graduate study in related doctoral programs. The program promotes scholarship, professionalism, excellence in counseling and psychology, and recognizes high attainment in the pursuit of academic and clinical excellence.

Professional counselors practice in a variety of settings including hospitals, substance abuse treatment centers, schools, colleges, universities, rehabilitation facilities, community counseling agencies, court systems, and other settings in which counseling or other mental health services are offered. Graduates are prepared throughout their program of study in regard to professional identity, social and cultural diversity, human growth and development, career development, helping relationships, group work, assessment, and research. It is recognized that advances in knowledge, skills, and technology within the profession require life-long continuing education for counselors.

question. Find a good academic advisor and go to that person for questions regarding curricula. Visit professors during their office hours and get to know them so that when you have a question it will be easy to ask. Ask the librarian to show you how to use the online library system for research.

- Get organized. Grab whatever works for you – desk calendar, cell phone calendar, planner – and enter everything at the beginning of the semester when you get the syllabi. Note when tests are and what they cover. Note personal events like doctor appointments and kids’ homework assignment due dates. Make lists in order by date so that you can simplify and prioritize. If you mark them off as you go, you get to see all of the progress you’ve made!
- Maintain adequate self-care. Make time for family outings, meals together, and exercise. Get the kids to bed early so that you can get adequate sleep. Carve out time with your spouse when you are *not* talking about school or work!
- Seek help from your support system. Ask helpful family and friends to babysit so you can study or just have some free time. Ask an older child to help more with chores around the house. Get your kids or spouse to help you study (kids love to see Mom or Dad studying and taking tests like they do!)
- Again, remember that you are not alone. You can do this! And just think – in a few years you might be writing an article just like this one, to pass on the torch to other nervous nontraditional students. And you’ll be telling them that they can do it too! Congratulations on your decision to begin a new career! Happy studying!

By Shelly McLain