



# EKU Department Psychology Newsletter

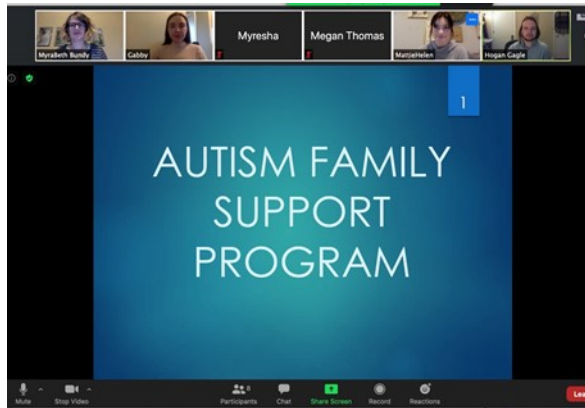
Eastern Kentucky  
University

Fall 2020

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## EKU Psychology Clinic's Transition to Telepsychology

A year prior to the pandemic, in March of 2019, Dr. Michael McClellan founded the ECU Telepsychology Clinic within the Psychology Department as a way to train doctoral students in our Clinical Psychology program in cutting-edge treatment approaches and to support his research in this area. Initially, a couple of the clinical students were trained and began providing clinical services to the ECU Corbin and Manchester campuses. That experience in developing the Telepsychology Clinic, training students, and supervising clinical cases during the clinic's first year of operation would prove invaluable in March 2020, at the start of the pandemic.



Above: Dr. Bundy adapts the clinic's autism services to Zoom.

Just as traditional, in-person clinics were shuttering their doors at the start of the pandemic due to quarantine restrictions, the ECU Telepsychology Clinic ... p.2

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## Animal Enrichment Class at the Equine Adoption Center



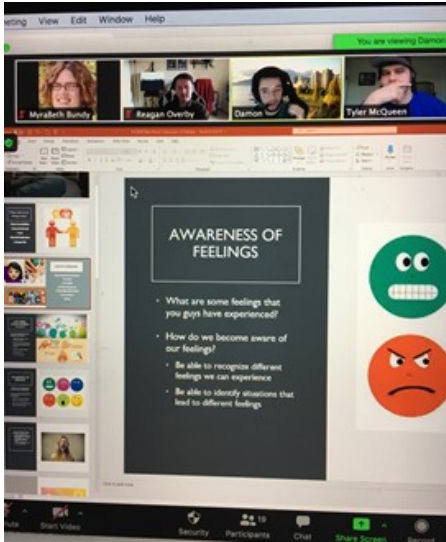
This past summer, the Animal Studies program offered its annual Animal Enrichment class, where students learn about animal enrichment or anything that keeps an animal from getting bored and elicits their natural abilities in captive environments. In the class, students are able to build enrichment for a species assigned to them at one of several facilities and get to travel to different facilities to watch animals engage with the enrichment they and their classmates designed!

COVID made it challenging to visit the usual facilities (Cincinnati Zoo, Primate Rescue Center) due to understandable concerns for the safety of the species housed there, but the Kentucky Equine Adoption Center was in ... p.2



### Cont. from p. 1—Clinic Transition to Telepsychology

was able to step in and fill the void in clinical services that the quarantine had created. Our traditional, in-person Psychology Clinic was forced to close as well. As we were attempting to figure out what to do with our 80+ active clients in the Psychology Clinic, the clinical faculty members realized that the Telepsychology Clinic could be the solution. We quickly began to train all 50 of the clinical students and the clinical faculty in telepsychology practice. Within a two-week timeframe, we were able to begin providing clinical services to the 20 active, high-risk clinic clients. And, within three weeks we were able to quickly transition the remainder of the 80 total clinic clients over into the Telepsychology Clinic and begin providing services virtually. Between March and September 2020, approximately 1,200 clinical contact visits occurred through the Telepsychology Clinic.



*Above*— example of activities in Autism Group at the clinic.

Not only has the Telepsychology Clinic proved invaluable to our clinic clients, the transition has also benefited our clinical doctoral students. These students are required to accumulate clinic hours they will need to secure clinical internships and, eventually, licensure. Where many graduate training programs around the country were unable to provide training opportunities to graduate students during the pandemic, our clinical students were able to maintain active client caseloads and continue to secure invaluable training hours using this cutting-edge technology.

### Cont. from p. 1—Animal Enrichment Class

a unique situation to allow the class to work in teams to design, build, and implement enrichment for their horses, all of which are rescues. Not only did they allow the class to design enrichment for the students, but they also invited the students out to learn about horse behavior! The students were able to learn about enrichment and still gain hands-on applied experience in the course (all while following COVID safety guidelines). Both the student and the horses had a blast!





## Suicide Prevention Focus of Dr. Moore's Mission at EKU

Melinda Moore is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and associate professor in the Department of Psychology at Eastern Kentucky University. Within her field of study, Moore focuses on suicide prevention and substance abuse, two areas that she feels are very much related. “People resort to suicide to escape the psychological pain they are experiencing, it’s a maladaptive form of coping, much like excessive drinking and taking drugs,” said Moore, “It’s not a moral failing, it’s a skill deficit.” Moore said we won’t know until data are collected if suicide was more prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic, which has changed what “normal” looks like across the globe since March.



Photo—Dr. Melinda Moore

“We will not know for two years, when CDC releases the data, what the suicide rates will be during COVID-19. What we do know is that there is evidence that economic downturns may lead to higher numbers of suicide deaths, like we saw in 2008 with the economic recession.”

Moore believes strongly in individuals’ resilience in the face of the global pandemic and concluded, “I think we are seeing a number of people reaching out to crisis intervention services because they are experiencing suicidal ideation, but not necessarily engaging in suicidal behavior. That’s good and why we need to continue talking about suicide and resources that exist to help.”

Moore did not expect to end up in this field. She was working in public health in the 1990s when she had a personal experience with suicide. After that, she realized that suicide was not a priority in public health, and that needed to change.

Moore earned her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from The Catholic University of America in 2012. Under her professor and mentor, Dr. David Jobes, she began training and conducting research in the Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality (CAMS). CAMS helps assess and treat a patient’s risk of suicide. Moore travels world-wide to train clinicians in this therapeutic framework.

“It’s been a long road but it’s been very gratifying,” she said.

Moore served as the principal investigator on the federally-funded EKU Suicide Awareness and Focus on Education (EKU SAFE) grant. EKU SAFE provided training, outreach, and awareness events for suicide education and prevention on campus at EKU. A website dedicated to suicide prevention at EKU was developed through this grant and can be found at <https://suicideprevention.eku.edu/>.



Photo—Dr. Moore and Dr. Makecha participating in the Virtual ArtVention.

The grant also developed novel education and outreach events. “Every year around World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10 we organize Artvention, an event that allows people who have been affected by suicide to come together and address their experience through art therapy,” she said. “This year ArtVention was held virtually and, in a partnership with the American Association of Suicidology, had participants from across the United States.”

Moore has imbedded a suicide class in the Psy.D ... p. 5 to

## Faculty Continue to Present Workshops Through Webinars

Even though the pandemic eliminated traditional conventions and conferences, most were converted to online affairs. This presented new challenges for the department's faculty as they had to adjust to a different way of presenting information. It seemed like each convention chose a different videoconference platform to run the convention. That meant getting used to multiple formats, usually just minutes before presenting on a topic.

In live webinars, conference organizers typically had participants video and audio turned off so faculty had to present to their computer screen with little to no feedback. They also had to monitor chat boxes for questions that participants had submitted.

"It was a bizarre existence where I spent hours talking to a computer screen in my home office," said Dr. Dan Florell. Dr. Florell did several conference webinars all around the country ranging from Montana and Wisconsin to Virginia and Pennsylvania all while never leaving his house.

He and several other faculty anchored the Kentucky Psychological Associations annual fall convention. They discussed topics on telehealth, suicide, and ethics. Other faculty who were involved were Michael McClellan, Melinda Moore, Theresa Botts, Teri Nowak, Matthew Winslow and Myra Beth Bundy.

## EKU PSI CHI and Psychology Club Update

During this Fall 2020 semester, the ECU Psi Chi Chapter and the Psychology Club have been unable to hold any in-person meetings or events due to the pandemic. However, we were able to host one online meeting to check in on how our members have been doing. The goal of the meeting was to generate a sense of re-connectedness with each other and to talk about future plans for our organization once we are back in our beloved Cammack Building. Indeed, we are hoping that we will soon be back to engaging in our usual social and charitable events that so characterize our organization's mission of recognizing and promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology.

In keeping with our noted mission, on December 10<sup>th</sup>, we had the first ever virtual ECU Psi Chi and Psychology Club induction ceremony. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, we have over 40 new members to be inducted this semester. We are thrilled to welcome each of our new members. Additionally, we look forward to getting back to fulfilling our role as an active and very productive organization, dedicated to the promotion of our field of study!

From ECU Psi Chi Chapter and Psychology Club officers and members to you and your family, we wish you all happy holidays and safe travels!

## Psychology Majors Present at Kentucky Academy of Science Conference

At the Kentucky Academy of Science conference, there were 26 student presentations in the Social Sciences Division, of which 16 were done by ECU students.

Hearty congratulations to Thomas Morris for his First Place win with his presentation "Voices' influence on effort ratings and recall performance." Excellent work, Thomas! His research mentor was Dr. Michael Chen, who also mentored excellent research projects by Mallory Robinson, Jon Phillips, and Katelyn McClure.

## Fourth Annual Artvention Goes Virtual in 2020

The fourth annual art-making event that honors experiences with suicide went electronic this year with Virtual Artvention 2020 in partnership with the American Association of Suicidology. Over 100 participants from around the U.S. participated in this event on September 22nd.

Led by ECU art mentor Julie Struck, only three others, including two faculty members, Dr. Radika Makecha and Dr. Melinda Moore, participated on site in Cammack, but over 100 suicide bereaved and other suicide attempt survivors participated from around the country. All created collages that represented “before and after” their experience with suicide. Participants talked throughout the event and expressions of grief and joy were shared by all.



Above—Psychology major Jon Phillips participated in Virtual Artvention 2020 and showed off his collage.

### Cont. p.3— Moore Suicide Prevention

program at ECU titled, “Understanding Suicide: From Assessment to Intervention and Management.” This course teaches graduate students in the clinical psychology program how to truly understand suicide and trains them in how to effectively treat it through CAMS.

“It’s the number one psychiatric emergency, but most mental health professionals have had little to no training online services. The clinic has become a national model for suicide-focused treatment using an electronic platform. Moore also facilitates a suicide bereavement group on campus, in order to address the needs of people most affected by suicide.

Moore said she believes we are making the right steps towards a better understanding of suicide. “It’s a matter of breaking down barriers, making sure various communities are working together,” she said, “It’s about extending compassion to ourselves and to the people who we see are struggling.”

If you or someone you know may be experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings please call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255 or the Crisis Textline at 741741. The ECU Psychology Clinic offers suicide-focused treatment. For more information about suicide prevention at ECU, visit <https://suicideprevention.eku.edu/>.

## Clinical Psy.D. Graduates Find Employment and Post-Docs Across the Country

The Psy.D. program continues to roll along, despite all of the challenges imposed by COVID-19. Courses continue to primarily be delivered remotely, but 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year students are seeing clients on practicum. Last August, the program graduated its largest cohort to date. 13 students graduated from the Psy.D. program in August, adding to the total of 23 graduates to date. These students are already in various positions across the country:

Dr. Luisa Jimenez is working at the Central Texas VA in Temple, TX

Dr. Maggie Freeman is working at Pediatric Psychological Associates, a private practice in Louisville, KY

Dr. Clint Nowicke is working at Compass Counseling and Psychology Services in Louisville, KY

Dr. Katibeth Sharp is working as a psychologist at Eastern State Hospital in Lexington, KY

Dr. Rachel Ruholt is working at Viewpoint Psychological Services in Crestview Hills, KY

Drs. Tanner Muehler and Chris Kidder are both working at the Lexington VA

Dr. Abby Dowdy is completing a post-doctoral fellowship in health psychology at the Cincinnati VA

Dr. Jennie Edwards is completing a post-doctoral fellowship at the University of Texas at Tyler Health Center

Dr. Alexandria Farmer is working at Seven Counties Services INC in Louisville, KY

These graduates put in a lot of time and effort over the past 5-6 years. Many of these students were in the initial cohort that launched the program in 2015. They saw us through all of the challenges in launching the program and going through the initial accreditation process. We are proud of their accomplishments and know that they will go forth and make the world a better place.

Make sure to follow the clinical program on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram!

## Expert Testimony Provided by ECU Professors



Photo— Dr. Wygant takes the stand to provide expert testimony.

Psychologists are among the most frequent experts in legal cases. They play an important role in criminal cases, particularly when a defendant's mental state impacts issues like competency to stand trial and criminal responsibility (i.e., insanity). In the civil cases, psychologists assess litigants who seek emotional damages as part of a lawsuit. Psychological testing is frequently used in evaluations to clarify issues of symptoms and diagnosis.

Dr. Dustin Wygant, who also practices as a forensic psychologist, and ECU Assistant Professor of Government, James Pennington, who also practices as an attorney, teamed up to examine whether including psychological testing during expert testimony enhances the persuasiveness of testimony or just clouds the issues and confuses the jury. Using a series of video vignettes of expert testimony, the researchers compared ratings of the testimony in clips that either showed (or excluded) psychological test results. Using a sample of undergraduates collected at ECU and a nationally-representative sample collected online through Qualtrics, the researchers found that in general, including psychological test results enhances the scientific credibility of the testimony.

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Let's Hear from Alumni



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