

Combined-Integrated Doctoral Program in CLINICAL AND SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

Alumni Reflections

Jessica Anderton Reynolds, PsyD

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"I very recently completed my postdoctoral training hours, and passed the licensing exams for Florida . I am still employed by my post-doc supervisor (Bloomfield Psychological Services) and I am considering options for the future. In my current position, I provide individual and group therapy to people involved with Federal Probation Services, and also for people involved with the Department of Children and Families (child protective services). In addition, I conduct evaluations of parental fitness, and assist with child custody evaluations. I very much enjoy the variety and the challenges in this position. I felt extremely well prepared by the C-I program, both in terms of specific clinical skills and by the open-minded, non-reductionistic approach to our training. On a personal level, I got married last year, and now have an 8-year-old step-son in addition to my own child Bobby (now 15). We bought a house, taught Bobby to drive (gulp) and taught the little one how to skateboard. It has been a full and eventful year."

Dr. Rose Flory, Psy.D.

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"As a 1999 graduate, I became licensed as a clinical psychologist in 2001. I have worked as a supervisor at a home for women with mental illness, taught a class at Blue Ridge Community College, taught a number of ASAP (Alcohol Safety Awareness Program) classes, worked as a relief staff member for Community Services Board, and started a small private practice in my home. For the past two years, I have offered a free weekly support group for women with eating issues. This spring, I plan to make my six acres more wildlife-friendly by adding a pond, trees, and grasses. Thinking back on my time in the program, I am most grateful for the support and encouragement I received from professors and peers--to be myself, to continue on my journey, and to make a contribution to my community."

Judith Wheat, PsyD, Licensed Clinical Psychologist

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"I joined the Shenandoah Valley Family Practice Residency Program (SVFPRP) in 1998 as one of the core faculty was recently promoted to Associate Professor. I was licensed as a Clinical Psychologist in 2000. The SVFPRP is a medical residency affiliated with the Family Medicine Department of Virginia Commonwealth University/Medical College of Virginia . We have an intern year site at Winchester Medical Center as well as a community based clinic site in Front Royal, Virginia for all three post-graduate years. This is a Health Psychology oriented role where I work in conjunction with a Psychiatrist and other Family Physician faculty to train a cadre of 16 Resident Physicians in interviewing, communication skills, diagnosis and treatment of mental illness that presents in an undifferentiated manner in a primary care medical setting. The curriculum includes lectures and didactics in psychopharmacology, brief therapy, family systems, psychological assessment, substance abuse, domestic violence, crisis management, complementary and alternative medicine, and leadership training. The three years of training further emphasizes a biopsychosocial approach to management of serious and chronic conditions such as diabetes, hypertension, obesity, hyperlipidemia, and other conditions that are best managed with a holistic approach. Along with teaching responsibilities and seeing patients during their medical visits, I also maintain a small private practice in conjunction. I recently created and produced a chapter on *Keeping the Family in Family Medicine* for a training CD that is used by the VCU Department of Family Medicine to introduce medical students to the diversity of the Family Medicine specialty. I have also developed the Objective Structured Clinical Evaluation (OSCE) used by our program to observe and assess first year Resident Physicians as they interact with standardized patients. A major part of this assessment activity requires recruitment and training of standardized patients who present with complex symptoms related to co-existing emotional and physical conditions. As you know, on average, sixty percent of emotional conditions are seen first by primary care physicians. Our residency program has been cited at the national level for our dedication to provision of educational opportunities that prepare our graduates to manage and coordinate care for patients with complex mental illnesses. This has been an exciting and rewarding career path that highlights how the JMU C-I program and the PsyD degree well-prepared me to not only create but successfully implement the Behavioral Health curriculum for this training setting. Please visit us on the web at www.valleyhealthlink.com/residency_program/index.html."

Pam Throck-Morton, Psy.D.

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"I work as a Licensed clinical psychologist and clinical director at New Lifestyles in Winchester , VA. Also, I serve as an Assistant professor at JMU, which will be my 12th year of teaching (including TA assignments). Additionally, I work part-time in private practice."

Christina Connolly-Wilson, Psy.D, NCSP

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"Following my excellent preparation in the JMU School Psychology program, I graduated from the C-I program in May 2005. I was married on 8/12/06 to Greg Wilson in Baltimore , MD. I currently live in Gurnee , IL , which is about 40 miles north of Chicago . I am working with the Waukegan Public Schools as a school psychologist and as the District-Wide Crisis Team Leader. I am also one of three trainers of the PREPARE Crisis Intervention Model in the state and one of 20 in the country. The program at JMU has helped me to expand my roles as a school psychologist to not just conduct assessments and consultations, but to be able to conduct therapy as well with the students that I serve. I also have a broader understanding of mental disabilities, systems theory, and conducting unique socio-emotional assessment tools like the Rorschach."

Brendan Kiernan Psy. D.

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"After obtaining my Psy.D. in the C-I program, from the first Clinical/School graduating class in 1997, then license as a Clinical Psychologist in the State of Alaska, I continued to work as a School Psychologist in the Juneau Public Schools, while also beginning then maintaining a very busy private practice primarily working with adults, couples and families, from 1998 until 2011. From 2008 until 2011, I also became a mental health leader in the State of Alaska, obtaining grants and working with the Governor, state and local politicians, state and local mental health administration and providers, and the Alaska Native community in addressing the Country's highest rate of suicide; by organizing and leading statewide and community based coalitions to develop prevention, intervention and postvention strategies and efforts. In addition I became very involved in global social/economic/mental health/political issues impacting the Alaska Native population which has the highest prevalence rates of DSM-IV-TR mental health disorders with the confounding complicating variables of substance abuse, child maltreatment, sexual abuse, poverty, homelessness, illiteracy rates or any other social ill imaginable relative to any other population in the country. A great deal of work focused on addressing the inter-generational trauma and grief so prevalent among Native Americans.

After serving Alaska and Juneau for 22 years, my wife, two children and I decided to see and work in another part of the world. In August of 2011 we accepted jobs at the International School of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; Kris as an elementary special education teacher, I as their School Psychologist for approximately 1000, 6th through 12th grade students. It has been a fascinating multicultural mental health experience to say the least. Although an English speaking IB diploma school, students and families are from over 60 countries throughout the world, bringing together a multitude of languages, values, cultures, experiences and world views. I find my great JMU training and years of experience in the clinical as well as school psychology fields extremely important given the very limited community based mental health services available in Malaysia. The majority of students families work for embassies, state departments, or corporations, and they travel the world, moving from location to location, or international school to school every three years. The experience which I absolutely love, as every day brings a new and exciting professional learning challenge, is only enhanced by the professional and family travel to Nepal, Thailand, Cambodia, Bali, Vietnam, Borneo, Laos, India, and China.

I obviously love JMU and the Shenandoah Valley, living and attending school there on and off for over fifteen years, as I also obtained Ed.S. (88), and Masters (86) in School Psychology, and BA (79) in Special Ed. all from our beloved JMU. A large part of my heart remains in the valley and with all the wonderful professors and colleagues I was so fortunate to work with and share time with in such an intimate program and profession. A special hello to Doug Brown, Jerry Benson, Harriet Cobb, Ed McKee, Jack Presbury, Anne Stewart and Patty Warner. "

Gerald H. Burgess

“It was great to be published, and I learned so much about professional psychological, protection of title, training models, and so much more via my dissertation – and it was personal as I moved country to work professionally in the process. The course also offered me, different from my master's, a wonderful exposure to psychometrics, wide-thinking formulation/conceptualisation skills, and particularly neuropsychology and London-based placements.”

Christina Connolly

“My graduate training from both the C-I and School Psychology departments allowed me to easily transition into an internship where I could complete the requirements with little to no supervision. The internship supervisors were surprised with the breadth of experiences that I received at JMU. From counseling, assessment, neuropsychology, etc., I was able to complete any task that was given to me. When I became a school psychologist, I quickly transitioned again to becoming a school administrator. JMU encouraged me to strengthen my leadership abilities to support students and staff members in schools. The diversity in practicum experiences between both programs has helped me to be the psychologist that I am today.”

Kara Devers

“The C-I program was a perfect fit for me. I appreciated the integrative emphasis and balance of clinical expertise and empiricism. I think critically about research outcomes and integrate treatment models to best support my clients. I am also grateful for the program's emphasis on self-reflection, which has made me mindful of my history and culture in reference to those of my clients.”

Adam J. Edmunds

“I believe my training at JMU was essential in my development as a clinician. The program's emphasis on self-reflection and the multiple aspects of professional psychology were second to none. I really appreciated seeing the different ways I could practice psychology while also seeing the connection between different orientations. I get teased by colleagues about being integrative, but I cannot think of a better way to describe how I see cases. The C-I program helped me recognize the effects systems have on one's functioning and how a psychologist can intervene. I really value the combined-integrated perspective and utilize it when working in psychotherapy.”

Andrea Falzone

“I am a licensed clinical psychologist at Penn State's Center for Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), where I specialize in treating survivors of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. I coordinate CAPS Purple Team services and serve as a liaison to multiple Penn State offices, including Penn State's Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response. I am also an instructor for Penn State's Counselor Education graduate program and I run a part-time private practice in State College, PA, where I provide psychotherapy to individuals and families and serve as a consultant to local agencies, including the Centre County Women's Resource Center and the Centre County Children's Advocacy Center. I earned a Doctorate of Psychology in Combined-Integrated Clinical and School psychology from James Madison University and a Master's of Science in Education degree from the University of Pennsylvania in psychological services. I completed my internship and residency at the Milton Hershey School in Hershey, PA, with a specialized focus on treating adolescents who had experienced complex trauma.”

Vesna Hart

“The program provided me a solid theoretical foundation to develop my own integrative approach to individual change, as well as understanding how systems change. The program deeply influenced me as a self-aware and reflective practitioner and scholar who deeply cares about human dignity and well-being at individual, community, and global levels. The focus on diversity and global engagement was an important component of the program for me, as I am currently working in the international education field.”

Monika Kushwaha

“Some of the best elements of the program involved my education in the theory and practice of psychotherapy and psychological testing. Further, the ways in which we were encouraged to be flexible in our thinking about

psychological difficulties helped to provide me a good base to provide treatment in a variety of settings at a variety of levels of care. I also appreciated being able to move through the program at a quicker pace than many other programs provide.”

Chase Levesque

“I cannot say enough good things about the training I received at JMU. The small size of the cohort (mine was 5) allowed for attention that I believe was critical to my transformation into a clinical psychologist. The training experience was both experiential and content driven. I think there are many programs where content can be learned, but I will never forget telling one of my peers enrolled in a different doctoral program about a learning experience with one of my supervisors that shook me to my core; it caused me to reflect on myself in new ways that were both threatening and essential. I remember my friend saying something along the lines of "Dude! What kind of program are you in? I'm not getting any of that here.”

I am incredibly grateful to my faculty and the level of engagement they brought to every interaction with me during my time there.”

Mark Menzies, PsyD

“My time at JMU was formative for several reasons. First, the emphasis on theory and critical thinking has helped me to recognize treatment principles across interventions, and has been an invaluable tool in my serving as clinical consultant. Secondly, the program encouraged us to accept the complimentary challenge to both articulate our "version of reality" with substantive information, and accept that we, like everyone else, will strive to have our needs met in the encounter with others. We therefore engage other perspectives in a more respectful, solicitous and empathic manner. A supportive part of this dialog was with my fellow students who seemed tireless in their efforts to learn, and who had diverse experiences they were willing to share. I learned a lot from them as well. Finally, related to clinical work, I felt the professors took an active interest in me and in my development toward the role of psychologist. Professors helped me to be more self-reflective and accepting of my own process, responsive to new information presented in sessions, and developmentally focused with client needs.”

Jessica Spaeth

“My time in the C-I program was a profound experience, both personally and professionally. The culture of our program, created by all faculty, was built on the foundations of support and encouragement. This, in turn, allowed for my open exploration and acquisition of various psychological interventions amongst multiple client populations. In my current practice, I find myself reflecting and using the skills I developed during my time in the C-I program and feel confident that I would not be the clinician I am today without the guidance of the faculty at JMU.”

Jason Stout

“I believe one of the most salient features of the C-I program is its integrative mindset. Having supervised 10 doctoral students from varying APA-accredited programs, I can honestly say that JMU C-I students are by far the most well-prepared to manage the complex challenges found in a state psychiatric hospital. Our students operate at a different level of assessment, conceptualization, and treatment delivery than their peers at other doctoral-level clinical psychology programs. The enhanced focus on self-awareness is also of major benefit.

On a personal note, I am honored to be married to fellow 2010 alum Jenna Holt, Psy.D. We have two lovely children and reside near Harrisonburg. We both enjoy our continued connections to the C-I program and helping new generations of C-I students prepare for their careers in clinical and school psychology.”

Mary Joanna Vilar (Mary Joanna Rankin)

“Looking back on the program, what stands out to me most is the emphasis on self-awareness and self-reflection (and really recognizing and understanding our own individual "issues" is you will), and how important and necessary that is to be a good psychologist. I recall that being a difficult piece for me while in the program, but after leaving I then began to miss the emphasis on this. I have made a point to keep this at the forefront of my professional and personal life. As a secondary, I'd like to add that emphasis on children and families (rather than just "adult clinical") has been so helpful, as I've found there is a lesser number of professionals (in my area of the country, at least) that do this kind of work, and as a result I am in high demand.”

Phoebe Wan

"The C-I program helped me to develop my own voice as a psychologist and allowed me to integrate different research and theories into clinical practice. One of the most valuable things that I learned from the program is the importance of establishing therapeutic relationships. While treatment/intervention might change over time, depending on people and pathology, the value of therapeutic relationship stays constant.

During my training at JMU, I had ample opportunities to work with the international office and international students. Another member of my cohort and I also completed a need assessment for OIP which was a very rewarding experience. In my current position, I continue to work very closely with international students and the international center. I organize an international student support group, provide outreach services and support them through individual counseling.

Last but not least, having a supportive faculty team and cohort during and after graduation has helped me to thrive personally and professionally. I feel "securely attached," encouraged and supported throughout my training. The faculty team is very culturally sensitive and they serve as good models for me."

Dara Zafran

"The doctoral program at JMU has impacted me greatly. I use the principles of interdisciplinary work every day in my work. My approach in supervision with trainees and staff is reflective and heavily influenced by the training of my JMU supervisors. "