

December 2019

The Paraphrase

Outreach Spotlight: No Body Shaming (BS) Week



No Body Shaming Week (No BS Week) was held during the week of October 13th-19th this fall. No BS Week is focused on spreading awareness about body positivity on campus by the Eating Disorders and Disturbances Treatment (EDDT) Team from the Counseling Center in collaboration with other groups on campus. Throughout this week, Counseling Center Graduate Assistants and Counseling Center Paraprofessionals on the EDDT Team hosted tabling events on the quad giving students access to information about not only body positivity, also general resources provided by the Counseling Center.

The Counseling Center promotes a healthy ideal rather than a thin ideal due to the thin ideal being an unhealthy reality for some. The healthy ideal means an individual's eating behaviors and attitudes toward food and body image reflect high self-esteem and physical health. It is important to discuss body diversity in regards to the healthy ideal because healthy living can be achieved at any size. Instead of focusing on weight, shape, and size, the EDDT Team strives to shift that focus to encouraging well-being and healthy habits.

The Counseling Center uses an outreach approach that allows students to increase their awareness and understanding of body positivity through helping students create personal experiences to aid their understanding. Some of our outreach activities include spinning a wheel and answering questions about body positivity, painting on rocks, and individuals writing down what they appreciate about their bodies. It is important to shed light on the prevalence of disordered eating in college students through these outreach and prevention services. Through No BS Week events, the EDDT Team aspired to educate students about body positivity, encouraging healthy behaviors, and treating all bodies with respect.

Written by Meghan Ryan

JENNIFER HOUSE

Embedded Counselor at Gies College of Business



Jennifer House is an embedded counselor at Gies College of Business. She received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology as well as her Master's in Social Work (MSW) degree from the University of Illinois. Before Jennifer started her journey as an embedded counselor at the college this past August, she worked at Carle Hospital for nine years. Her MSW in Healthcare has led Jennifer to work at Carle, but for Jennifer, she always saw herself coming back to the university to work with students. When comparing her work experience with Carle with her role as an embedded counselor in the College of Business, Jennifer notes that her previous role is more reactive as she was working in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), but as an embedded counselor, she is now in a preventative role. Jennifer must pave her own way on how being the first embedded counselor in the College of Business will look like.

According to Jennifer, the overall atmosphere at the college is very welcoming; everyone at the office is excited to have her on board. For her, it certainly has been a rewarding experience and it is particularly rewarding for her when she is able to help this specific demographic of students without them having to walk across campus to the Counseling Center. Her understanding of the program in Business School also is very helpful for Jennifer as a counselor.

When talking about self-care, Jennifer strives to have at least a 30-minute lunch break every day. Sometimes, Jennifer will also take a stroll outside just to refresh herself and refocus. Also, family is also a big component of her self-care methods. Spending time with her partner and kids keeps her grounded. However, for Jennifer, it is important to know that these self-care methods would not always work. There is always room for adjustment and changes to make it work.

When asked for advice for people who wish to enter the field that she is in currently, Jennifer notes that passion is an important aspect. Some people are lucky to land a career that they are passionate about, but for Jennifer, you can also find ways outside if your work to fulfill these passions—and either scenarios are acceptable. Another piece of advice from Jennifer is finding ways to take care of oneself in this challenging field. Jennifer's last advice is to find a support person. Someone that can identify when you are in stressful situations and when you might need to take some time to yourself—and encourage you to do that.

Written by: Ifrina Zainal Abidin

Counseling Center Staff Spotlight

SILVIA SALAS

Clinical Counselor



Dr. Silvia Salas joined the Counseling Center at the University of Illinois this fall as a clinical counselor. She received her Master's degree in Clinical Psychology with a concentration in Latinx Mental Health from the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, in Chicago, IL, before receiving her PhD in Counseling Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in Milwaukee, WI. Her past clinical experiences range from working in community mental health settings and the Department of Veterans Affairs, which provided her with invaluable skills via her work with survivors of military sexual trauma and underserved communities facing barriers stemming from systemic oppression. During her pre-doctoral internship at the University of Akron's Counseling and Testing Center, Dr. Salas had the opportunity to work within a college setting for the first time and saw the transferability of the skills she gained in her training. Currently, Dr. Salas is part of the Latinx Student Outreach Team, the Eating Disorders Outreach Team, and the Queers and Allies Outreach Team. The clinical services she provides include individual counseling, eating disorders assessments, and group counseling including the Mindfulness Meditation Group as well as the Gay, Bisexual, and Questioning Men's Therapy Group. She appreciates the wide range of opportunities that the Counseling Center gives her.

Receiving training in Latinx Mental Health during her Master's program was a life-changing experience for Dr. Salas. Seeing people who looked like her in the field and learning a non-westernized perspective of psychology gave her a new understanding of what healing could be. Through mentorship and training she learned to understand herself as a Latinx, an immigrant, and a Queer Womyn of Color in the US. The skills she gained helps her to better serve Latinx and other under-represented communities. She chose to understand the lived experiences of transgender (trans) Latinx immigrants as her PhD dissertation topic because she wanted to expand the lack of within-group representation, that is often deficit-based, of gender-diverse individuals within Latinx psychology. Paying attention to how membership in multiple oppressed social groups shapes people's experiences is also an important aspect of her work.

Dr. Salas is passionate about highlighting the beauty and strength of the Latinx community. Though the community encounters many barriers and challenges, they are a resilient group that shaped the U.S. as a country and will continue to do so. The most rewarding part of her job is having the opportunity to bear witness to the resilience of students even under the most oppressive conditions.

She enjoys self-care practices that rejuvenate herself as a person and allows her to connect with others in an authentic way. Checking in with family and loved ones is important to her.

Some advice that Dr. Salas has for CCPs is to find mentor(s) who will both nurture your spirit and challenge you. It is useful to find a mentor who shares similar backgrounds and does work that interests you. According to Dr. Salas, a good mentor should validate your humanity as a person as well as encourage you to be a critical thinker about your own internalization of oppressive systems. She looks forward learning about the ways in which she can continue to support and connect with students at Counseling Center at the University of Illinois.

Written by: Allison Wyland

Sabrina Mirza

Hometown: Crystal Lake, IL

Senior in Psychology (Minor: Criminology)



What made you want to apply to the CCP Program?

I wanted to apply to the CCP program to advocate for the counseling center and strengthen my leadership/professional development. It also aligns very well with the scope of possible careers I am considering post grad school. The careers I am interested in is going into Social Work programs (MSW). I eventually want to do private practice or/and work under a non-profit.

What made you pick Cognitive & Psychiatric Disability Outreach Team?

I've always been very interested in learning more about different mental disorders, particularly Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and Autism so I wanted to join this team to educate myself more on these topics and expand my knowledge to mental health outreach. Since I've always been interested in mental health disorders and this helped me when I was ranking my teams, I felt like this team would be very intriguing and allow me to expand my knowledge on disabilities. Also, just be able to learn about stuff I haven't learned before.



What is your favorite memory of Cognitive & Psychiatric Disability Outreach Team?

I don't have a specific favorite memory from the team, but I always enjoy the fun activities that our Paid CCP on the team puts together for every meeting. They're always engaging and informative. One of the activities that stuck out to me a lot was when we did a role play activity. The paid CCP gave me and Palak prompts and we didn't know the prompts we each had; and Palak basically had exploded in a hypothetical workplace which was really interesting because I was supposed to handle a situation hypothetically and, in this situation, I was the boss. So overall, the role play helped me learn how to talk to someone with these issues.

What have you learned so far from the Cognitive & Psychiatric Disability Outreach Team?

Being on this team has allowed me to learn in a deeper level on how ADHD affects a lot of people and to be more sensitive to people who have these mental disorders. It has allowed me to have more empathy and have more self-awareness when going out into the real world. I cannot wait to see what's in store next semester.



Written by: Stephanie Ramos



Palak Patel

Hometown: Huntley, IL
Junior in Psychology



What made you want to apply to the CCP Program?

I wanted to be more involved in mental health and learn how it affects my community. I want to see the problems that arise from college students and how to address prevalent problems like anxiety, depression, alcohol use, drugs and the relationship it has with mental health. Also, how to destigmatize mental health, there is a lot of bad association with mental health. Since it isn't talked about as much as it should and that comes with misperceptions. For example, when you go to a primary doctor, they don't ask you how you feel mentally; they only ask what is physically wrong. I feel like this is something that is important, people only want to talk about what's visible and not what's inside and this is why mental health is important.



What made you pick Cognitive & Psychiatric Disability Outreach Team?

I want to be a Clinical Psychologist and get a PsyD. I thought this team would help me explore more in depth on different situations and experiences I might encounter when being in the field. This is because I don't know a lot of cognitive disorders. I didn't know much about Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or Autism, so for me this was important because I wanted to expand my knowledge on the brain and cognitive deficits.

What is your favorite memory of Cognitive & Psychiatric Disability Outreach Team?

My favorite memory was with the other CCP, Sabrina, and Paid CCP Saheli. We did a simulation on what Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) we were able to experience what people with ADHD struggle with impulse control. Sabrina was playing the boss and I was an employee, and I couldn't control myself, as in my emotions. To me it was interesting because I think a lot before I say something, so having this conversation with "my boss," since I was saying things that first came into my mind and this is how ADHD people feel and I cannot imagine going through this.

What have you learned so far from the Cognitive & Psychiatric Disability Outreach Team?

I have learned about different disorders such as Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism, and impulse control disorders. I've learned about how hard life can be for people who have mental disorders because the outside world doesn't really know what is going inside their head. In addition, there is a lot of stigma because the outside world does not understand as well, because they are ignorant to what people with ADHD actually go through. In reality, they have mental disabilities and people need to be more educated on this subject.

