HDFS Supports

Relay for Life - April 14th through 15th, 2007

Can you believe that more than 1.3 million new cancer cases are expected to be diagnosed in the United States this year? Those are staggering statistics, but there is hope. Each of us can do something to save lives and help those already fighting this disease. That’s why the graduate community outreach committee of HDFS has decided to take action against cancer by supporting the American Cancer Society Relay for Life event here in State College.

Relay for Life is an overnight event that brings our community together to help support the American Cancer Society and its lifesaving mission to eliminate cancer as a major health problem. The Society works hard every day to prevent cancer and save lives by supporting groundbreaking research, affecting public policies that protect us from cancer, and educating people on how to prevent or detect cancer early. The Society helps people with cancer right here in our own community. And our efforts at Relay for Life can help the American Cancer Society to keep working towards a cancer-free future.

Please show your support in the ongoing fight against cancer by joining us in supporting this year’s event. We hope to see you there! If you can’t join us, you can still show your support by donating to support our efforts. Either way, you will make a real difference in the lives of people facing cancer, and the lives of people who love them. Thanks! ~Beau Abar

Awards, Academic & Professional Achievements

Larissa Duncan was awarded the Penn State Alumni Association Dissertation Award
Kelly Davis & Molly Countermine were awarded Graduate Assistant Outstanding Teaching Awards

Masters:
Fall ’06 - Elizabeth Cipriano; Margaret Colby; Rachael Kelleher; Tara Stoppa
Spring ’07 - Jochebed Gayles; Annie Pezalla; Nissa Towe

Comps:
Fall ’06 - Joanna Bissell; Graciela Espinosa
Spring ’07 - Sean Banks; Ashleigh May; Brittany Rhoades; Kelly Rulison

Doctorates:
Fall ’06 - Soyeon Cho; Meghan Gillen; Aryn Dotterer; Sarah Meyer Chilenski
Spring ’07 - Jeff Dew; Suzanne Robertson; Kelly Cichy; Carolyn Ransford
Meet the First Year Cohort -- 2006-2007

If I could sum up my first year in two words it would be: culture shock. Coming from the San Francisco Bay Area, I find myself in the middle of the America that I have only known about on T.V. and in the movies.

People tried to prepare me. When I visited during Prospective Students Weekend, the grad students told us that it’s nothing like California, there’s snow in the winter, it’s expensive to fly out of the little airport, and the food options don’t compare to what I’m used to.

Perhaps one of the most alarming things I learned (at home, not here) was that Central Pennsylvania is, in fact, considered the Midwest. I was living in a rural area! The city girl in me was worried.

So why am I here? Because, honestly, I fell in love—with the program, that is.

The HDFS program at Penn State is ranked among the top developmental psychology programs in the country. State-of-the-art methodologies are being developed here with multiple opportunities to jump into the middle of it. The faculty are experts in their field. The atmosphere is collaborative, interdisciplinary, and supportive. I would be free to learn, explore, grow, and challenge myself. Essentially, the sky’s the limit. (No, I wasn’t paid by Steve Zarit or Doug Teti to say this!)

I’m slowly adjusting to my environment. I think I can identify a groundhog if I saw another one again, I try not to think about horror movies as I drive by cornfields at night (ever seen “Children of the Corn”?!), and the idea that people leave their doors unlocked doesn’t weird me out anymore. I even bought my first winter coat and snow boots, and I think I’ve mastered the art of layering before facing the bitter winter cold.

Grad school has also meant major internal adjustments. One day you’re on top of the world (“I love grad school! I’m so happy to be here!”); the next day you can feel like you were accepted by accident and what you thought was right is wrong and vice versa (“Why am I here? What do I know? What do I want to do?”).

The veterans in the program assure me this roller coaster eventually normalizes, that I belong here, that I can and will achieve great things. My advice to the incoming cohort is to draw from the strength of others when you feel your own faltering. Then pass it on.

I surveyed the gals in my cohort to get their thoughts on the first year experience.* Below, they share their ups, downs, and tips for incoming students. You’ll see some common themes but also a diversity of experiences. (And as I have learned, power can be improved by increasing variance despite the small sample size.) Names have been hidden to protect the innocent and the guilty.  ~ Mary Lai

*And no, I’m not being sexist and leaving guys out...there ARE no guys in our cohort. Legend has it that there was once as many as 4 guys in a cohort, but some have mysteriously disappeared...
Meet the First Year Cohort --2006-2007

Overall, what are your thoughts about your first semester in the program?
- It was challenging but it brought me to a level of professionalism that I wouldn't have learned otherwise.
- I think I may be the anomaly of the cohort, but I really liked my first semester in the program! The semester wasn't nearly as bad as I had planned for and I had plenty of time for socializing and doing things that I wanted to do. I've been saying that "I was expecting hell, and all I found was a nightmare".
- It was a tough one but we learned a lot about graduate life: how to improve our reading and writing skills; meeting and getting to know friends.

What was a fun/memorable experience?
- There's no one specific memory, but everything social was awfully fun: department tailgates, Zeno's Happy Hour, Grey's Anatomy parties, going out on the weekends
- Attending a professional conference with my advisor and lab members
- Hiking is AMAZING here!

What could you have used more help with last semester?
- Writing, time management
- Speed reading; figuring out how to clarify my interests
- Both students and faculty went out of their way to help us. A lot of my struggles were personal and I had to deal with them in my own time and way

What are your thoughts about the future (in the program or otherwise)?
- The outlook is sunny!
- I think my interests are too broad and I would like to narrow it down a little bit. I would also like to know people better
- It will be very busy but meaningful years ahead

What was a major challenge that you dealt with?
- Getting used to the non-traditional work-week, always having more work to do, and not having nights and weekends off
- The hardest part was adjusting to a new place and being away from my family and friends. But with a cohort of 17 people, it doesn't take long before you create a new circle of friends that can be your "family"
- The large amount of reading; trying to express myself in class; trying to catch up with the projects that my advisor is doing...

What helped you get through the semester?
- New friends here and getting away once in awhile to see old friends/different places [the drive to NYC really isn't bad!]
- The strong relationships I developed with the cohort as well as in older cohorts
- Taking time for myself. There's always something school related that you could be doing, but it's more important to step back every once in a while and allow yourself to have fun
- Coffee

What was your theme song for last semester?
- “Apples and Bananas”
- “If It Makes You Happy”
- “I Will Survive”
Looking back, what was an important lesson that you learned?
- I don't have to know everything immediately. Graduate school is a journey rather than a race. It is also important for me to not be so hard on myself and to learn to say “No” at times. I can't base my self-worth solely on my performance as a graduate student, but I had to decide for myself that I was prepared to sacrifice personal satisfaction in order to pursue the best possible training in the field.
- Sleep is important.
- First: I learned that I need to remember that you only have one chance to make a first impression with professors. I had to remember to take myself as seriously as everyone else was taking me. Second: Thinking positive will get you everywhere you need to be. There is no room for second-guessing yourself in graduate school. You are here for a reason, and the sooner you accept this about yourself, the better.

Your top recommendation for good food in State College?
- Harrison's - delicious, but not too expensive, and they have free wine tasting on Wednesdays!
- If you've got money: Zola’s...if you don't: Faccia Luna
- Harrison’s, Gamble Mill, Zola’s, and Cozy Thai

Any tips for next year's incoming class?
- Relax, it will all get done
- B is for Balance, don't compare yourself to others - really!
  Study groups are necessary, take time to not think about school, fun and socializing are very important, particularly if you would like to retain some sanity.
- Take time to socialize! Do not seclude yourself!

⚠️Want to prevent winter weight gain? Start Fidgeting!⚠️

When most people think of physical activities that will help them maintain a healthy weight, they think of things like going for a walk or taking an aerobics class. But, physical activity is actually comprised of both volitional exercise (exercise you chose to do, like sport and fitness-related activities) and nonexercise activity thermogenesis (NEAT).

NEAT is defined as any activities that aren’t voluntary attempts to exercise, like activities of daily living (walking up stairs, bringing in your groceries), fidgeting, and maintaining good posture. You may not think these little activities contribute much to your daily calorie burn, but a study conducted by researchers at the Mayo Clinic and published in Science suggests that NEAT is one factor that distinguishes between normal weight and overweight individuals. Specifically, of participants overfed 1,000 calories a day for 8-weeks (which should have caused a 16 pound weight gain), those with increased NEAT were able to resist major fat gain, gaining as little as 2 pounds over this overfeeding period. Bottom line: these little activities add up and can help you maintain a healthy weight. So, throughout your day make a conscious effort to move more: Jiggle your legs when your sitting at your desk, tap your feet when you stand in line, sit up straight when working on your computer, pace around when you are talking on the phone and pick the furthest parking spot instead of the closest. These fidgets and minor changes could help you burn more calories every day!

~Ali Ventura
Welcome the new additions to the Perritti family - meet Gavin and Maddy (see below). Congrats to Amy, Matt, and big brother Garrett!

Sarah and Jordan are already over 6 months old! (Eva & Sarah and Eric & Jordan are pictured above)

Kelly and Kayla on ice... Kayla’s very first time skating! (see left) Kayla will be 3 on March 26th.

Molly & Lucy are looking cuter than ever! (see above) Lucy turned 2 years old on January 18th of this year.

Tara & Eli are pleased to announce the addition of their new chihuahua puppy, Francois, to the family (see above).

They grow up so fast! Beau and Caitlin’s new puppy, Brinkley, is getting bigger everyday...(above, this fall; right, this spring).
**Tsunami Updates**

Sri Lanka has made tremendous progress in rebuilding the country after the Tsunami. Presently, the victims have been re-housed, the infrastructure rebuilt, and many have been re-employed. In a matter of few years, Sri Lanka has physically recovered. However, much work remained to be done for the victims to mentally recover. The bar-chart depicts the mental health effect of the Tsunami among adolescents. The photos depict a re-employed man and a rebuilt playground.

Our department fund-raisers and other sources of funding have helped raise money to award tuition scholarships to tsunami-affected students. The number receiving monthly scholarships has risen to 8.

For additional details about the tsunami destruction in Sri Lanka, please visit this web site:
http://www.priu.gov.lk/tsunaminoc/indexnoc.htm

~ Thulitha Wickrama

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**Friends, Family...and don’t forget Follies!**

Laura Wray and Brian Lake tied the knot on December 16th, 2006! *(pictured left with Lindsay, Brittany, Megan, Liz, and Becky; Below: Kristi, Mike, Nissa, Ben, and Caitlin enjoying the reception.)*

Laurie, Megan, Brittany, Becky, & Blizz, taking advantage of some of the great hiking trails nearby *(above)*

The fourth years (and friends) show off their pot-lucking skills *(below)*

Don’t forget... Follies is coming up soon!

Laurie, Becky, Megan, Ali, Lindsay, & Brittany, enjoying some down-time *(above)*