



ETSU SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES    SPRING 2014

# Illuminated Magazine

GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH MAGAZINE    VOL 3 (II)

## Illuminated Magazine

### FROM THE SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

The East Tennessee State University School of Graduate Studies is proud to present ILLUMINATED, a magazine that showcases the excellent work of our graduate students and their faculty advisors.

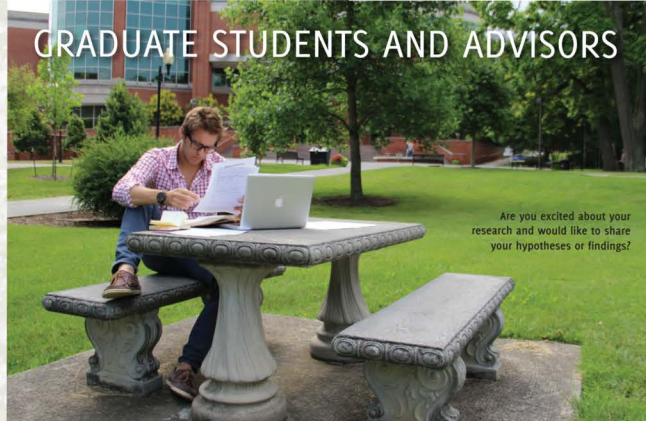
There are over 2200 students enrolled in graduate programs at ETSU. ILLUMINATED presents some of our students' research and creative works that make meaningful contributions to various disciplines, and contribute to our strong graduate programs. ILLUMINATED features research and creative projects that are currently happening on campus, and provides updates on alumni of ETSU graduate programs.

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Are you or one of your graduate students working on a culminating experience (e.g., thesis, dissertation, capstone)? Your research could receive additional exposure through *Illuminated Magazine* and help educate the rest of the campus about your department and program. This is a unique opportunity to get your work recognized!

#### ➤ For current graduate students and their advisors:

Did you or one of your students get accepted into an excellent doctoral program or receive an excellent career opportunity? We want to hear about it! Share your story in the "Where Are They Going?" section.

#### ➤ For former graduate students and their advisors:

Do you know an outstanding student who graduated from ETSU more than a year ago? We want to hear from them! The "Where Are They Now?" section features former ETSU graduate students who are now professionals in positions across the country.

**Form available:** [http://www.etsu.edu/gradstud/pdf/Illuminated\\_Magazines/Illuminated\\_Nomination\\_Form.pdf](http://www.etsu.edu/gradstud/pdf/Illuminated_Magazines/Illuminated_Nomination_Form.pdf)

*For more information on nominating students or getting featured in Illuminated, please contact:*

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Illuminated Magazine

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# POSITIVE EFFECTS

Reformulating common pain relievers in order to improve effectiveness and minimize harm.

by Jordan Powers

**A** background in nutrition and dietetics fueled Dustin Cooper, a PhD candidate in Biomedical Sciences concentrating in Pharmaceutical Science, to continue to pursue his interest in drug formulation and delivery. "I would go to Wal-Mart and look at the vitamins and wonder why they chose a liquid form and what made that form important." He describes his work in the lab under his advisor, Dr. Harifirooosh, as a dream come true.

Dustin's current project examines the reformulation of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) in order to

reduce harmful renal (kidney) side effects. NSAIDs are taken by millions of Americans each year to reduce pain and inflammation. "The main problem is the distribution of the drug and we hope to reduce the amount of drug that reaches the kidneys," said Dr. Harifirooosh.

Dustin examined two types of NSAIDs: diclofenac and celecoxib. Drug companies take the base powder forms of these drugs and place them in either capsules or tablets. The goal of Dustin's project was to reformulate these two drugs into polymer based nanoparticles. The term nanoparticle refers to particles that are very small in size. There are different types of nanoparticles, but those with a polymer

base are more biodegradable and therefore less toxic when taken orally.

First, the base drug was ordered and an examination of previous literature on nanoparticle formation was conducted in order to find the best method. "We look at the properties of a drug, whether it is polar or non-polar, water soluble or fat soluble, and ask what method we can use to formulate this drug into a nanoparticle, based on its physicochemical properties," explained Dustin. Diclofenac and celecoxib differ in characteristics so it was necessary to formulate each one differently. Diclofenac is semi-polar and soluble in water, while celecoxib is non-polar and fat soluble. Solubility refers to the drug's ability to be dissolved in another substance.

A solid evaporation process was used in the formulation of both drugs. A polymer was added to the base drug in order to create an organic phase. This organic phase was added to an aqueous phase. The aqueous phase contains a stabilizer to help form, compress, and ultimately stabilize the nanoparticle as it develops. Two types of stabilizers were used in the aqueous phase: polyvinyl alcohol and didodecyltrimethylammonium (DMAB). "We wanted to look at the effects both stabilizers would have on our drug formulation," said Dustin.

In order to make a nanoparticle, the organic phase of the drug was slowly added, drop by drop, into the aqueous phase. When the organic phase hits the aqueous phase it exerts an opposing force and repels into itself forming a sphere - the

nanoparticle. In order to make the particles even smaller, the solution was spun until the organic phase evaporated, leaving only the aqueous phase containing the nanoparticles. The nanoparticles were then examined and characterized based on their size and the amount of drug contained.

Dustin had success formulating both drugs but he found celecoxib the most difficult. "Celecoxib is very difficult because it doesn't like water, so it was hard getting it to stay in the solution." He also described this part of the process as highly interesting and enjoyable. The formulation process of mixing the two phases was tried multiple times with different concentrations of the drug. "Higher concentrations of the drug yielded a lower percentage of entrapment in the nanoparticle but by lowering the amount of the drug more of it was encapsulated," he explained. By lowering the drug concentration the majority of the drug was encapsulated, forming a usable nanoparticle.

The small size of the nanoparticles helps the drug to avoid detection by the body's natural systems that remove foreign objects. Dr. Harifirooosh hopes that these discoveries will aid in lessening renal side effects by decreasing the amount of drugs that reach the kidneys. Now that he and Dustin have successfully formulated the nanoparticles, they plan to examine the drug's effects on rats.

In the next phase of testing, some rats will be given both drugs via the non-

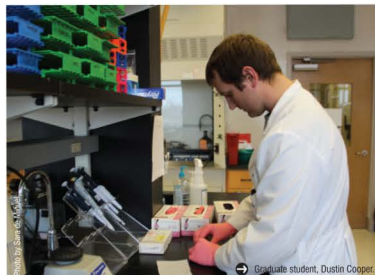


Photo by Sam Co. Wolf

➔ Graduate student, Dustin Cooper.

oral delivery that patients currently take, while others will receive the drug in nanoparticle form. The rats will be kept in metabolic cages for eight hours in order to gather urine samples. Samples of their blood and an autopsy of their kidneys will be performed in order to ascertain the effects of each drug delivery method. Rats who received nanoparticles should experience less negative side effects, which is obviously beneficial. "A large number of people are affected by these side effects so any reduction will be beneficial," said Dr. Harifirooosh.

Dr. Harifirooosh and Dustin both describe their work as rewarding. "I enjoy every time I find something new; every moment is exciting and interesting for me," said Dr. Harifirooosh. Dustin noted that the most enjoyable part for him was learning the methods and the formulation process. He also stated that he learned to be patient from both the process and his advisor. "Until I joined this program I thought my strength was my aggressiveness towards getting things done. Aggression is good but unless you practice patience you might not get results," he said.

Dustin has published three peer-reviewed journal articles and is currently working on creating and revising more manuscripts. He has also had the privilege of presenting on campus at the Appalachian Student Research Forum, as well as off campus at national pharmaceutical conventions. In addition to his own work, Dustin is also working with other students on projects utilizing nanoparticles to increase the effectiveness of supplements.

A well-rounded education at ETSU is preparing Dustin for a bright future in the world of pharmaceuticals. "The good thing about what I am doing is that it gives me so many skills that look good to employers," he said. Although he has many skills, Dustin's primary interests are in drug formulation and Pharmacokinetic/Pharmacodynamic (PKPD) studies. PKPD studies investigate how drugs travel through the body and what they do. ●



Photo by Bryant



➔ Left, Dustin Cooper. Right, Sam Harifirooosh, Ph.D.

Photo by Silvio de Miguel

## Using Interdisciplinary Studies to Understand the Formation and Development Effects of Public Policies

by Jordan Powers

A curious mind and a variety of interests in multiple fields led Asongayi Venard to choose the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies. Liberal Studies allowed him to explore other departments and programs to create a unique program of study. Dr. Jill LeRoy-Frazier, Asongayi's research advisor, noted that his interests and curiosity make him a good fit for the program. "What makes Asongayi such a perfect fit for Liberal Studies is that he approaches problems and questions with such a sense of complexity and nuance. It's not limited within a single discipline or a single field of study," she said.

Upon entering the program, Asongayi took interest in courses in a variety of departments. "I went into sociology, philosophy, anthropology and the empirical sciences, and picked up theories, concepts

and approaches," he said. During his first semester he decided to take classes in Public Administration. He found the Planning and Development concentration interesting, and decided to do dual master degrees in Liberal Studies and Public Administration. With insights from both programs, he quickly began examining the formation of public policy, especially within the scope of international development.

Through this examination Asongayi noticed that the creation of public policy was not simply the influence of one party's agenda; it was an integration of the ideas and interests of multiple stakeholders. Utilizing his previous training in philosophy and biomedical science, he used the term hybridization to describe the phenomenon of international development public policy formulation that he discovered. Hybridization is the blending of different and sometimes opposing in-

stitutions, ideas, agendas and goals into a cohesive policy—a synthesis of different policy options. Although he could see this process happening, he had to test his hypothesis using a real world case study.

In order to test his hypothesis, Asongayi chose to examine the development policies of the World Bank, an institution that provides development aid to less-developed countries as one of its many charges. Asongayi used political, economic, sociological, environmental, and psychological theories, as well as cost-benefit, Geographic Information Systems, and statistical analyses to study the World Bank's policies as they relate to forest resource management in Cameroon.

World Bank policies implemented in less-developed countries may involve models and methods conceived in, and for, Western societies with realities at variance with that of many less-developed countries. Asongayi originally thought his study would show how the World Bank formulated and imposed its policies on the government of Cameroon. However, his findings supported a hybridization model—the real-world combined actualization of different policies in which the nature and contentions of one policy is modified interactively and pragmatically by the other policy. The result of this policy fusion is not distinct, multiple policies, but one phenomenon with its own unique aspects.

In order to understand this phenomenon, Asongayi critically examined the history of different development policies formulated by the World Bank. He found that the World Bank realized policies successfully implemented in Global North nations (United States, Europe) and applied in the Global South (Africa, South America) under the umbrella of conditionality

were often not working in less developed countries. Therefore, the World Bank formulated a policy of ownership that seeks the government's consent to development policies. This policy embraced country-specific interests, with the intent that these interests would lead to increased support by governmental agencies. However, conditionality and ownership cannot be separated. "The World Bank cannot simply give out its resources without checks and balances. These two must come together if you want to realize any development," Asongayi explained.

Focusing on forest resource management in Cameroon, it appears that both the World Bank and the government are often convinced about the validity of their management ideologies and strategies, which often results in disagreement. In the Cameroonian context, tribal elitism is part of the national politics. The World Bank dislikes tribal elitism because of the risk of corruption in governance. The World Bank had to engage in dynamic conservatism in its dealings with the Cameroon government. Asongayi describes this dynamic conservatism as paradoxically hanging on to one's own values but leaving room for other values to shape one's convictions without losing the essence of one's values.

Dr. LeRoy-Frazier noted that there is a power differential between the World Bank and the country. According to the modernist model of development, historically the Western developer has determined the means by which the country will be brought out of poverty, often without regard to cultural context or participation by the indigenous peoples themselves in the planning and implementation processes. The difference here is that, as Asongayi discovered, there is actually room for "push-back" against the developer's plans from the country's government in its efforts to have the country's needs met. Although development ideologies do not interact ex-

actly as negotiations between institutions, such a scenario reveals that influence on development planning comes both from the bottom up (the country's government) and the top down (the developer).

Not only is the relationship between a specific country's government and the World Bank important, local communities are very critical in regard to successful program development and implementation. In line with the contentions of the 1992 World Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the World Bank insisted that local communities be brought into the development process of developing countries. In this regard, local communities would exploit forest resources for their economic gains. Logging companies, governments and international agencies would also be stakeholders in the

forest management process.

Asongayi found that the addition of the local communities added more stakeholders into the policy implementation process and presented another example of hybridization. Some stakeholders might have their own agendas that do not align with the World Bank's goals. Consequently, there is selective inclusion of stakeholders in the policy formulation and implementation processes. Selective inclusion is itself an act of stakeholders' hybridization

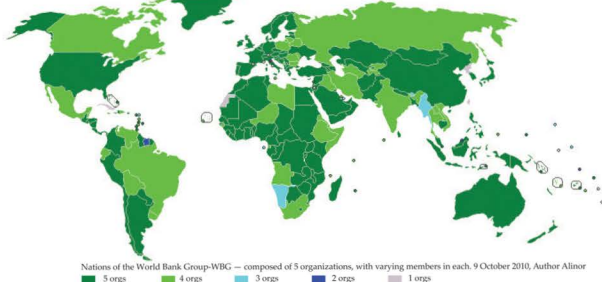
**Hybridization is the blending of different and sometimes opposing institutions, ideas, agendas and goals into a cohesive policy.**

because it neither includes nor excludes all parties that have a stake in the development process. "This allowed for a stable political and social situation," Asongayi explained.

Asongayi has presented different pieces and perspectives of his research at several conferences, such as the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies conference in Chicago (October 2013), the Sociology of Development conference of the American Sociology Association in Salt Lake City (October 2013), and the NEXUS Interdisciplinary conference in Knoxville, Tennessee (March 2014). After graduation, he intends to further his professional interest in policy analysis and societal development, and to pursue a doctorate in public policy and development. ●



Left, Asongayi Venard.  
Right, Jill LeRoy-Frazier, Ph.D.



# Building a Healthy Lifestyle

Helping families implement healthy habits in their daily lives.

by Jordan Powers

**E**mily Stern, a master's candidate in clinical nutrition, has been interested in nutrition since high school. "I realized I could have done a lot better as an athlete if I had cared about what I was putting into my body and how I treated my body," she said. As Emily learned more about nutrition she realized she wanted to help others understand the importance of nutrition and how it affects their bodies. "I would like to find a way to provide good quality food to everyone."

Her advisor, Dr. Michelle Lee, had the perfect project in mind for Emily. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offered grants to implement the Kids Eat Right RD Parent Empowerment Program. The Kids Eat Right RD Parent Empowerment Program had been implemented in select schools for two years, and they were now interested in broadening its scope to include the southeastern region of the U.S., and also to expand to Head Start centers. "I had already been talking to the Head Start centers about other nutrition projects so this one just fell in to our laps and luckily Emily was my grad student," explained Dr. Lee.

In order to understand and make an impact on the healthy habits of children, workshops were conducted for the parents. The parent empowerment portion of the program included a workbook and a cookbook. The workbook served as a guide for each of the four workshops Emily and Jordan Clark, another Clinical Nutrition student, conducted at a local Head

Start center. Topics included decreasing screen time, physical activity, shopping, eating and cooking smart, and establishing healthy habits for the whole family. The program provided Emily and Jordan with an outline to follow at each workshop. "It was structured but we had room to adapt it to our area because the other sites were more metropolitan; so we had different challenges and opportunities," she said.

Before beginning the workshops a parent focus group was conducted with some of the most active parents to gain feedback about what they would want to learn and the best times to meet. Once a time and night was chosen, the program was advertised to all of the parents and children.

Twelve parents began the program and six of the twelve completed the program. During the first workshop, parents completed the Family Nutrition and Physical Activity Screening Tool. This twenty question survey, allowed Emily to see what the families' healthy habits were prior to completing the program.

The workshops took place over a two month period, and participants were reminded to attend via email and telephone. In addition to the parents, the Head Start directors also attended the workshops. Over the course of two months, parents learned how to make healthy meals, shop for affordable healthy foods, and integrate more physical activities into daily life. Emily noted that one of her favorite parts of the workshop was the interaction between

participants. "I enjoyed the parent interaction; you could just see the light bulb turn on. I feel like they took away a lot of important information they could choose to implement at any time in their life."

In addition to receiving life changing tips, parents also received kits to help them implement the lessons learned in the workshops. "We did a spaghetti night

and began developing their own strategy for a healthier lifestyle. "We had a family that started doing 20 minute dance parties after breakfast. It provided a way for them to be physically active that didn't involve driving to a park," said Emily.

After completing the four workshops, parents completed the Family Nutrition and Physical Activity Screen-

ing Tool as a post test. The highest score parents could receive was 80%. The pre-test findings had an average score of 65%. After the workshop the parents' score increased to 69.8%. However, the results did not reach statistical significance. Emily noted that the small sample size might be the issue.

Emily hopes that the parents continue to implement the healthy behaviors they learned in their own lives, as well as share them with others. Dr. Lee has had recent contact with the parents who participated in the program. "Having seen the parents a year later and heard them talk about what we did show, the program had a positive impact on their lives." Parents remembering the healthy tips and activities they learned in the workshops shows they retained important information to help their families lead healthier and more active lives.

Dr. Lee stated that this project and Emily's work within the program has prepared Emily to develop her own nutritional programs. "She has learned the pros and cons about everything we did. She's ready to get out there and do her own thing." Emily is currently working on a manuscript with the national group at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics based on her research findings.

After graduation Emily plans to take the registered dietitian exam and gain experience in clinical nutrition. "I like metabolic support and doing critical care. I have a passion for things involving food security and food quality, and I would like to find a career along those lines," she said. ●

**"I realized I could have done a lot better as an athlete if I had cared about what I was putting into my body and how I treated my body,"**

and sent them home with a colander, spaghetti sauce, mushrooms, a pepper and an onion. The food only cost a total of \$5, and it showed parents they could eat healthier for less," explained Emily. Most of the parents were on a limited budget, so it was important to show them that they could be healthy and economical at the same time.

The workshops were met with positive receptions from the parents. After the workshop on physical activity, one family

and began developing their own strategy for a healthier lifestyle. "We had a family that started doing 20 minute dance parties after breakfast. It provided a way for them to be physically active that didn't involve driving to a park," said Emily.

After completing the four workshops, parents completed the Family Nutrition and Physical Activity Screen-



Left, Emily Stern.  
Right, Michelle Lee, Ph.D.





# University Career Services

by Jordan Powers

The mission of University Career Services is to provide ETSU students and alumni with information, resources and support in setting personally meaningful career goals, developing effective search skills and materials, and generating contacts with employers or graduate schools. The services and events they offer are essential to graduate students seeking to continue their education or enter the workforce.

"It is all about developing a personal skill set and contacts that will enable people to be more successful in their job search," said David Magee, Director of ETSU Career and Internship Services Center.

University Career Services is located in the D.P. Culp University Center on the second floor in the Advisement Resources Career Center.

### → Who can use University Career Services?

All students, alumni and faculty can use University Career Services and the resources provided.

### → What Services do they provide?

Career education, job search preparation and graduate school information

### → College Central Network (CCN)

CCN is an interactive web-based program maintained by University Career Services on their web site. New job opportunities are posted daily, primarily by regional employers. Students and alumni are encouraged to register on CCN to find employment opportunities and upload resumes for employers to review. "This has become a useful way for students to connect with employers," said Ms. Wilbanks, Information Research Technician II. Students can enroll in this program on the University Career Services website, [www.etsu.edu/careers](http://www.etsu.edu/careers).

Get assistance writing and editing:

- Cover Letters
- Resumes
- Curriculum Vitae
- Graduate School Application Essays
- Job Applications

### → Enhancement of Interview Skills

Important knowledge such as business etiquette, appropriate dress, body language and strategies for a successful interview are reviewed and practiced. "I find this area to be very critical. A lot of people assume they have the skill set because they've gotten by so far," said Dr. Magee. "A professional job search is a whole different ball game that takes insight, understanding and practice."

### → Networking

Dr. Magee noted networking as one of the most important skills an individual can develop. "We focus on this skill for all students, but it is essential at the graduate level." Networking involves knowing how to interact appropriately with other people to find new connections with potential employers and graduate schools. People who learn to network generally find many more opportunities than those who simply complete online applications, because they are generating contacts with decision makers.

According to Dr. Magee: "If all you

do is find jobs posted on the web and apply, you are always in the position of being one applicant in a very large group. Networking makes you stand out and opens up the possibility of finding opportunities that have not even been advertised."

### → Outreach

University Career Services also provides presentations and workshops on career-related topics for classes and student groups. Requests from faculty and staff are always welcome.

### → How Do I Schedule an Appointment?

Students can set up appointments by calling (423) 439-4450.

Walk-in hours for resume review are also available during the week. Walk-in hours and days are posted each semester.

### → Does University Career Services hold any events?

Yes!

Two major career fairs are held each year. These fairs are open to all students and alumni, and faculty are encouraged to attend.

The Fall Career and Graduate School Fair is a campus-wide event which takes place every year in October. During the spring semester, the Interstate Career Fair which is organized by a consortium of 17 colleges is normally held in the Millennium Centre across State of Franklin Road from the campus. In addition, an Education Career Fair featuring regional school districts is held each spring, generally in early April.

Ms. Wilbanks noted that the career fairs offer exceptional opportunities to network with employers. The fairs are open to all students and alumni, and faculty are encouraged to attend.

University Career Services maintains an active schedule on campus. Special events with student groups and employers occur year round. To see a schedule of these special events visit

<http://www.etsu.edu/careers>.



Left: Ruth Wilbanks  
Right: David Magee, Ph.D.



Photo by Sara de Miguel

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

...an extended look

**CATHERINE PRITCHARD CHILDRESS**  
English, M.A.  
2013



For former graduate student Catherine Pritchard Childress, a master's degree provided the necessary training for her to grow as a poet, as well as the opportunity to do what she loves. Her advisor, Dr. Donald Johnson, is proud of her maturation as a writer and her success as an up-and-coming poet. Catherine's work has been published in prestigious literary journals that include the *Connecticut Review*, *North American Review*, *Louisiana Literature* and *Southern Poetry Anthology*. She currently teaches as an adjunct at Northeast State Community College and at ETSU in the Department of Literature and Language.

For her master's thesis project, Catherine crafted a collection of poems called *Other*, with

the help of Dr. Johnson. The poems featured were mostly persona poems, written in the voices of biblical women and other voices she felt were not accurately heard. "It started with an assignment I received in Dr. Johnson's class to write a poem as a letter, and I wrote it as a letter to Lot's wife," she said. Catherine noted that the poems in her graduate collection differ from her earlier works. "I didn't expect the poems to evolve the way they did; it was triggered by one of my assignments, and it evolved on its own."

The process of creating a collection is an enjoyable yet difficult process. Catherine noted that some poems come easily to her and she finishes them in a few hours, while she labors over others for weeks. "Everyone has their own

process, and I don't know that I have one that is definable. A lot of times they happen in my head, and it is a while before they find their way to paper."

Catherine learned many things from Dr. Johnson, but the one that stands out most for her is the way he taught her to approach language. "The way he uses language and the way he encouraged me to think about language and words in ways I wouldn't have considered before." Two years ago a word meant a single thing for me, and now I can spend hours laboring over a word in a poem and find a way to make it work more than one way," she said. Dr. Johnson noted that she feels as though he learned as much as Catherine did from the process.



Photo by Sara de Moor

Left, Catherine Childress  
Right, Donald R. Johnson, Ph.D.

When asked what advice she would give to students considering pursuing a master's in English, Catherine noted they should be realistic. "I would do everything I've done all over again. I love what I do, and that makes it worth it to me. The practical side that folks interested in this field should be realistic about is opportunities, especially in this area. I could do what I am doing: running from place to place teaching 5 or six classes for 5 years before I ever get a permanent position; so having said that it has to be something you love."

Catherine plans to continue teaching and writing, and hopes to one day publish a book.

### Other

"...There were also women looking on from a distance,  
among whom was Mary Magdalene"  
Mark 15:40

*Your chosen men returned to their homes, their nets, their doubts. Could not watch you force final, shallow breaths into your lungs, bearing down on the same feet I wet with tears, wiped clean with my hair, muscle and flesh tearing away as you cried out to your Father.*

*I wiped your mother's tears, listened to you offer forgiveness to the thieves beside you, waited to hear you call my name, prayed you could see me there, not forsaking you, not betraying you, not leaving you, but longing for you to finally acknowledge me.*

*You beheld her and your beloved John before you died, but I was left to follow your cold body, stand silent while a stranger held you in his arms, sheathed you in silk and perfume, laid you in a dark tomb. Still I waited, believing you would come for me, not leave me, three days later, crying again at your feet. ●*

"Permission to reprint "Other" from  
LOUISIANA LITERATURE."

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



**COLLEEN VASCONCELLOS**  
History, M.A.  
(American History with a minor in  
Modern European History) // 1998

### + Where do you work?

I live in Atlanta, Georgia, and I am an assistant professor of history at the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia. I received tenure and was promoted to the rank of Associate Professor in February of 2014. My tenure begins in the 2014-2015 Academic Year.

### + What is your job and field of research?

I teach courses on the Atlantic World and the African Diaspora, as well as Latin American and Caribbean History. I teach both undergraduate and graduate students, and I am currently directing two graduate theses on topics relating to the African Diaspora. I am also a member of the Women's Studies faculty, and I am an Advisor for the Africana Studies program and minor at UWG.

My PhD dissertation and second book, which will be published by the University of Georgia Press next year as part of their Early American Places Series, focused mainly on enslaved children's experiences in Jamaica, and how the British abolitionist movement affected and impacted their lives and the nature of African cultural identity within the slave community on the island. My first book, *Girlnood: A Global History* was published by Rutgers University Press in 2010.

### What's your favorite part about the research?

+ Working on the history of enslaved children in any region can be difficult because they are so young and on the periphery of anyone's attention. I really have tried to give them a voice and tell their story. When I can do that, I find it very rewarding. That said, I just enjoy research, it's exciting to explore old census records and plantation inventories.



#### How has your Master's degree helped you?

My MA really helped prepare me for my PhD and for the career I have now. It gave me a solid footing in American Studies, and a nice grasp of European Studies, which helped me a great deal when I entered the Atlantic Studies program at FIU in the Fall of 1998. I had some great professors at ETSU, like Doug Burgess and Mel Page, who taught me how to think outside the box and approach history with a more open mind. The MA program at ETSU taught me to think like a historian and really helped prepare me for the path that I would take after I left.

Mel Page, who is now Emeritus Professor of History at ETSU, was and still is a mentor to me. In fact, he's the reason why my research has been on children. When I was finishing up my second year of grad school and I was thinking about potential thesis topics, I went to him and asked him if he would be my Thesis Advisor. He asked me what I wanted to write my thesis on, and I told him The Slave Trade. He asked what specifically about the slave trade did I want to study and I said "ummmmmmmmm...." I knew that I wanted to research Atlantic Slavery for my doctorate, and I thought the slave trade was the perfect place to start. Only, I hadn't thought about it much further than that and I was a little naive as to what all an MA thesis entailed. So, we talked a bit, and he said "What about children?" and the rest was history. I wrote my MA Thesis on children's experiences in the trans-Atlantic slave trade and expanded that as a doctoral student to the British West Indies.

#### What advice would you give to current graduate students?

The most important thing I can tell any grad student, whether MA or PhD, is you have to take a day for yourself every week. Graduate school is a HUGE time investment, and when I was a grad student, I ate, drank, and slept school. Problem is, that's how you burn out, so you have to have some time to yourself to read something for fun, or go to a movie in the afternoon. Do it! You'll thank me later.

The second bit of advice...time management is key. Time management is so important, because you don't want to be in grad school forever. So figure out a system that works for you, and don't let the semester get ahead of you. This is going to be really important when you are on your own and you start your thesis. I have seen many a grad student struggle to finish their thesis and end up not graduating on time because they don't manage their time well.

I think another thing that grad students should do is present at least once at a conference. It's a great way to meet people and network, and it's a great way to get some good feedback on your work. I'd also like to see MA students write at least one book review or a few encyclopedia articles (which pay!) before graduation, preferably in your second year. Start building up your CV now, and get some experience publishing small things. It looks great on PhD and job applications.

Lastly, I think being a part of a graduate community is really important, because you guys are all in the same boat. When I was at ETSU, all of the graduate assistants shared an office, and we all had office hours together. It was great, because we built up a little support network, and I still keep in touch with many of them today. Those friendships last, and while you will always be peers, someday you will become colleagues, and you never know when you will need something or want to bounce some ideas off of someone. ●

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Empowering teachers to improve the health of their students.



Instructional book for teachers created by Tonya Hensley

by Jordan Powers

**T**onya Hensley, a Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) student, noticed an increase in the number of overweight children visiting the school-based health center where she works. This led to her interest in focusing on childhood obesity for her capstone project.

Tonya, with the assistance of her advisor, Dr. Florence Weierbach, focused on a program to increase physical activity during classroom time at a local elementary school. "I could have done something simple to graduate but I wanted to make a difference. Dr. Weierbach worked with me and helped me to come up with something meaningful," said Tonya.

Ten years ago, North Carolina implemented the Healthy Active Children Policy, mandating that schools within the state ensure students engage in 30

minutes of physical activity each school day—half of the national guideline of 60 minutes per day. Tonya's goal was to get teachers to use classroom time to move children closer to achieving the national 60-minute target.

"I felt like they [children] were getting time at recess and once a week in Physical Education but there was more we could do during the day in the classroom to get them up and moving," said Tonya.

Tonya focused on children ages 5-10. A total of 29 teachers from one local elementary school participated in her study to increase classroom activity. When North Carolina implemented the Healthy Active Children Policy, they created a book to aid teachers in bringing more activity into the classroom. Tonya conducted a one-hour training session with the teachers at the beginning of the school year and supplied each teacher

with a free copy of the book. She also educated teachers about the national guideline of 60 minutes each day and the health benefits of more activity.

A pre-test and post-test was given before and after the training to gauge the teachers' knowledge of activity requirements and benefits. Few teachers realized the national guideline differed from the state requirement. They found this information helpful and the immediate post-test showed they intended to change. The post-test was given six weeks later to measure the retention of knowledge.

Although the positive attitude from teachers and their intention to change were ideal, it resulted in an increase of classroom activities implemented by the teachers. The average amount of time spent doing activity in the classroom before Tonya's training session was 14-15 minutes per day. Six weeks after the training, teachers had increased the activity level to 27 minutes of in-classroom activity.

Dr. Weierbach explained that while the intent to change was good, the most impressive result was that teachers retained the knowledge and actually implemented changes. "We look at behavior change at six-weeks because that is when a sustainable change occurs, according to the literature." These results showed the importance and effect of Tonya's work.

Tonya's study allowed her to involve individuals outside of the healthcare system and empower them to make a

positive impact on children's health. "She employed another group of people who are service oriented and passionate about what they do. They are in an environment where physical education and soft skills are devalued, and they bought into Tonya's vision," said Dr. Weierbach.

Since completing her research Tonya has had the opportunity to write and receive three grants. She applied for and received \$13,000 in grant funds thus far. These grants are being utilized to improve the nature trail at the school where she conducted her study. Instructors and students from the local high school are helping make these improvements. "They are going to come and do renovations to the trail, build exercise stations and an outdoor classroom," explained Tonya.

Tonya has presented her research both locally and at the county level. She also presented at Sigma Theta Tau's international research conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. Dr. Weierbach is proud of Tonya's accomplishments and noted that her growth has been beneficial to the children in her region.

After graduation, Tonya plans to continue working at the school-based health center and hopes the experience she gained during her doctoral education makes her more valuable to the county. She now has the skill set to conduct another project in her area, and she plans to start writing grants for her agency. In the future she hopes to expand on her research and see where it leads. ●



Left: Florence Weierbach, Ph.D.  
Right: Tonya Hensley

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



**JOHN MILSTEAD**  
History, M.A.  
(World History)  
// 2012

**+** *Where do you go to school?*

Currently, I'm enrolled in a Ph.D. history program at Michigan State University.

**+** *What is your research about?*

My dissertation research focuses on the role that people of African descent played in shaping nationalism, race, and citizenship during the nineteenth century. Following Mexico's independence in 1821, historians, journalists, and intellectuals wrote Afro-Mexicans out of national history and emphasized only the country's indigenous and European heritage, even though people of African descent comprised more than ten percent of the population. I am interested in how Afro-Mexicans contributed and reacted to this partial silencing while preserving unique cultural identities and communities that survive today. To trace out how people constructed race, identity, and citizenship, I am studying two regions of Afro-Mexican predominance: Jamiltepec, Oaxaca and Córdoba, Veracruz.

**+** *What's your favorite part about the research?*

I find this particular project rewarding because it allows me to continue researching in Mexico. History department grants at ETSU provided me with the opportunity to research and attend classes for two summers in Mexico. During that time, I developed an intense interest in conducting archival research and made contact with some of the leading scholars in the field. Essentially, I'm building on these contacts while incorporating more archival research in various archives in Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Mexico City in my current project. I am also interested in the development of the Mexican state,

nationalism, gender constructions, and notions of citizenship. This project allows me to explore all of these themes and ties in with a growing body of literature dealing with state formation, race, and culture in the nineteenth century. In addition, due to a lack of work on this particular aspect of the Afro-Mexican experience, this work is uniquely rewarding since it addresses a distinct lacuna in Mexican historiography. Up to this point, scholars have focused on people of African descent during the colonial era (1521-1821) or the twentieth century. My project directly targets this little-known history in two regions of Afro-Mexican predominance.

**+** *How has your Master's degree helped you?*

ETSU's MA history program provided me with the foundation for success in MSU's highly competitive program. Dr. Daniel Newcomer, Dr. Steve Nash, Dr. Brian Maxson, and the rest of the graduate faculty prepared me for this program by challenging me in their graduate seminars. In particular, my MA committee chair, Dr. Newcomer, demanded excellence in all aspects of my graduate career. His high standards for me in both the classroom and in my research made success at MSU possible. In fact, I currently have accumulated a 4.0 grade point average in my coursework along with a package of grants funding a summer's research trip to three locations in Mexico. Essentially, I've been able to achieve at a high level here at MSU due to the rigorous instruction and challenges posed during my two years in the Department of History's MA program. Dr. Katrina Hill in the Department of Literature and Language also had high expectations for me and required that I work hard to become fluent in Spanish. This has proven crucial to translating nineteenth century documents and communicating in the street as well as the archive.

**+** *What advice would you give to current graduate students?*

In terms of advice, I would suggest to current and aspiring graduate students to seek out the excellent professors available to them at ETSU. Once you've found people who you would like to work with, like the history department's excellent faculty, be sure to listen to them. Chances are, they've been in your position as a graduate student and/or advised successful students before you met them. In many ways, the faculty at ETSU is the university's most valuable resource for students. I would also encourage students to challenge themselves by taking classes that not only appeal to their interest but that also have high expectations.

**+** *Is there anything else you'd like to share?*

During my time at ETSU I also had the opportunity to meet some excellent people outside my academic department. In particular, working for Dr. Dan Brown as an academic advisor gave me a perspective on working for a university. This has proven imperative to navigating the even larger bureaucratic university structure at MSU. Above all, ETSU was an excellent opportunity for me and my wife, who earned a BA with high honors in journalism and photography in 2012. In fact, one of my proudest days was being able to graduate in the same ceremony. ●

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