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UNRAVELLED

Newsletter for the School of Education and Psychology

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The School of Education and Psychology Introduces Master of Arts in Teaching



The new Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program which is up and running this semester, has been designed for those who already have a bachelor's degree in a non-education field and later decided to become a teacher. Offered fully online, its accessibility is one of its shining features.

Tammy Overstreet, dean of the School of Education and Psychology, explained how the biggest problem in education right now is a lack of teachers. She is so excited for this program, because it gives people who feel called to teach the perfect opportunity to expand their education. "Students can continue working while doing the program online. When they are ready, their old career would end and their new one would begin," Overstreet said. "We anticipate that this program will attract people who are missionally driven. It is not an easy job to be a teacher, but it is very rewarding."

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FROM THE DEAN'S DESK

One of the things we do at our faculty/staff meetings is take time to celebrate the good things happening here in the School of Education and Psychology. When our faculty, staff, students, or alumni make us proud, we name it and take time to be grateful, thanking Jesus for our blessings. These occasions make my heart glad, and I would like to share what we have celebrated over the last few months.



Tammy Overstreet, PhD

In May, two of our faculty members received prestigious awards from the university. Southern named Professor Krystal Bishop the recipient of its Distinguished Service Medallion in recognition of her grace, passion, and tireless work in Christian education. Also, it presented Cristy Pratt, associate professor, with the President's Award for Teaching Excellence to honor her remarkable success in engaging with and caring for students. We are so proud of each of our faculty and so thankful for the ways they contribute to our programs and students.

Southern's Board of Trustees recently granted professor emeritus status to our beloved Ruth Williams, who retired last May. Another of our professors, Matt Tolbert, received the William F. Johnson Sr. United Way Community Service Award. Since service in the community is a core value of our school and university, we are grateful when our faculty members model this with the gift of their time.

Several of our faculty members have published articles, including education associate professors Gary Bradley and Monty Murdoch. Psychology Professor Tron Wilder has been doing important work on a grant that seeks to promote restorative justice in schools. Two of our faculty members, Melanie DiBiase and Cristy Pratt, accepted invitations to present on best teaching practices in higher education for Southern's Colloquium for faculty and staff. In September our certification officer, Katie McGrath, presented on teacher education programs at the Tennessee Association of Colleges for Teacher Education conference for public and private college/university faculty.

This past summer we welcomed two new faculty members, and already we are benefiting greatly from the contributions they are making. Jasmine Johnson, EdD, directs our new Master of Arts in Teaching program, while Sarah Penagos, MA, joins the faculty of our psychology program. Both educators have brought new energy, perspectives, and ideas that are helping us stretch and grow in crucial ways. Students are greatly enjoying these new faculty!

In July, we learned that our education undergraduates did very well on key state assessments. Our students' first-time pass rates on recent teacher licensure assessments put us ranked third of all the educator preparation programs in the state of Tennessee. Our students give us many reasons to celebrate!

In August, we held our first-ever Counseling Student Colloquium, which helped our counseling faculty and students learn a lot plus get to know one another better. In October during Homecoming Weekend, we hosted our Psychology Symposium, with presentations that highly engaged both students and alumni. On that same weekend, two of our graduates—Edely (Yepez), '09, and Abner Sanchez, '13, who are serving as missionaries in Micronesia—were honored as Young Alumni of the Year. We celebrate the many School of Education and Psychology alumni who, like the Abner and Edely, are living out their commitment and calling through lives of service.

As we finish the year 2022, we ask that you will join us in praising God for His blessings and provision for our school.

Giving Day: Why Is It Important?



Students and professors in the counseling program appreciate the Giving Day donations that funded a recent student scholarship.

Giving Day is an opportunity for the Southern community—alumni, parents, employees, students, and friends—to come together and make a difference in students’ lives. Tammy Overstreet, dean of the School of Education and Psychology, says that her favorite day of the school year is Giving Day. “I love watching the excitement of professors and staff coming together, reaching out to people, and sharing their passions about the causes that we are raising money for. It is encouraging to see the generosity of people who believe in our program. I appreciate seeing people share their resources and give to students.”

The teacher education program raised \$3,400 this past Giving Day. Those donations will provide two students with a Spiritual Leadership Scholarship. Krystal Bishop, director of the education program, said: “Giving Day is important because it is a way for us to unite around a common area of passion, to have fun as we find creative ways to raise funds, and to bond with our current students. To be able to award scholarships for spiritual leadership inspires each of us and enables us to recognize teacher candidates who are serving in ways that often are not recognized.”

The psychology program raised \$611 last year and is currently using those donations to support undergraduate student research. When students want to pursue independent research studies and need funds to support them, the psychology program can assist. For students who want to present research at a professional conference, these funds will help pay for their attendance fees, as well. Tron Wilder, director of the psychology program, said: “Giving Day is a way to connect with and engage alumni, friends, and even current students in our program. It helps support important work that our undergraduate students are engaging in.”

The counseling program raised \$2,125 last year and will use those donations to provide one counseling student with an Intentional Leadership Scholarship. Ileanna Freeman, director of the counseling program, said: “Giving Day is important because it helps us be able to award one of our amazing counseling majors with a scholarship so that the student can stress a little bit less about work or finances and focus on his or her learning and practical experiences.”



Teacher education student Abbie Kyriakidis enjoys interacting with her peers in class.

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New Faculty: Welcome, Sarah Penagos!



Sarah Penagos and her husband enjoy hiking and traveling as well as spending time with nearby family.



Sarah Penagos, MA, grew up in Nashville, Tennessee, until she left to pursue her undergraduate degree at Lee University in Cleveland, Tennessee. During her undergraduate experience, she transferred multiple times before completing her teacher education degree at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga. She then moved to Florida to pursue a master's degree in school counseling. Though Penagos has achieved a high level of education, she still plans to one day complete her doctoral degree in counselor education.

Penagos has worked as a school counselor in public middle and high schools for her entire career, predominately in low income, high ESL populations in both Florida and Tennessee. When asked what led her to the field of education, Penagos referred to her passion for young people and her desire to give them a safe space and person to rely on for help with things that matter. However, she started to feel stagnant in her work as a school counselor, and how the opportunity to teach psychology at Southern opened. Penagos explained that becoming a professor was stepping far outside of her comfort zone, but she felt that God was calling her to do so. Thus far, she has loved watching her students learn and get excited about new information and new ideas, as well seeing them make the connection between classroom content and their own lives. When asked what her philosophy of education is, Penagos answered: "Practicality matters. If the learner cannot relate to the content, then it is just information."

Penagos lives with her husband of 17 years and their two dogs. They enjoy spending time with their siblings, nieces, and nephews in the area. In her free time, Penagos enjoys reading, crossword puzzles, mountain biking, and hiking. This past summer she was able to vacation out West and has plans to visit the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone when the school year ends in May.

New Faculty: Welcome, Jasmine Johnson!

Jasmine Johnson, EdD, was born into a military family, and spent her childhood moving around a lot. Johnson aspired to be a lawyer when she began her undergraduate studies, so she completed a Bachelor of Arts in History with an emphasis in pre-law. Upon graduating, she found interests in both corporate America and teaching. These interests led her to complete an MBA and an MAT, as well as her EdS and EdD in instructional leadership. She plans to one day also get certified in sign language.

Johnson has worked in many different SDA academies as both a teacher and administrator. When she transitioned into her education career, she knew her end-goal would be to teach in higher education. She hopes to pass to her students a love for the field of education, a love for practice, and an energy that will always burn inside their spirit. Johnson loves Southern because it gives her the opportunity to talk about the Lord each day as she helps others reach their professional goals. Her philosophy of teaching is “Every student, every day, in every way, but Christ must be the center.”

As director of the new Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, Johnson has quickly made her mark on the staff and faculty in the School of Education and Psychology. Graduate programs manager Mikhaile Spence said: “[Johnson] is a breath of fresh air. Her enthusiasm and energy are contagious, and we’re excited about where the MAT program will go under her leadership.”

Before moving to Tennessee this year, Johnson lived in Georgia with her husband of 15 years, Steven, and their three children, Anaya, Ariana, and Amare. Johnson commented that they love being together, engaging in family activities such as Pathfinders. They also enjoy many outdoor activities, including going on walks, camping, hiking, sports, and skating. She thinks others would describe her as “caring, energetic, and passionate.”



Jasmine Johnson, EdD, loves being able to talk about the Lord each day as she helps students reach their professional goals.



Johnson and her family enjoying time outdoors.

Alumni Spotlight: Education

Sarah Kilroy graduated from Southern in May of 2022 with a BA in Liberal Arts Education (K-8) and has a true passion for the field of education. She recalls that when she was nearing the end of her high school career, she feared entering college with an undeclared major, because she wanted a path for her life. However, after praying for a long time, she began to see what God was calling her to do, and which was to teach.

Kilroy currently lives and works in California where she teaches in grades 2-4 at an Adventist school. When asked what she finds most fulfilling in her career, Kilroy answered: “Seeing the positive effect you have on your students. Students come into your classroom, and throughout the year you get to teach them not only the basics of math, reading, writing, science and social studies, but also about life and God’s love for them.” She appreciates how Southern prepared her for her career, as well. One example that Kilroy mentioned was how quickly she and her classmates were able to get into schools; for Kilroy, it was her first semester. She also commented on the wide range of classes that Southern offers, as well as being able to learn the different “takes” on teaching from the various education professors.

Kilroy spends a lot of her free time involved in art and even painted a mural in her classroom. “I like to tell people that if they can think of an art hobby, I have probably done it.” Kilroy said. In the future, she hopes to go back to school to get her master’s degree in counseling or special education in an effort to become a better and more informed teacher. When asked what advice she would give to Southern’s current education students, she said: “Work in schools as an aide for as many years as you can! Not only does it look spectacular on your résumé, but if you pay attention to what the teachers are doing in class, you will practically be in a masterclass of teaching for all those hours. It helped solidify what I was learning in class to see techniques and methods in action.”



Sarah Kilroy teaches in grades 2-4 at an Adventist school in California.



Kilroy painted this mural on her classroom wall.

How can you help other students like Sarah Kilroy discover God’s calling in their lives?

Consider a future legacy gift that will provide life-changing opportunities for students at Southern Adventist University. For more information about how you can include Southern in your will or trust, call Planned Giving at 423.236.2832.

Department Highlights

Counseling Colloquium

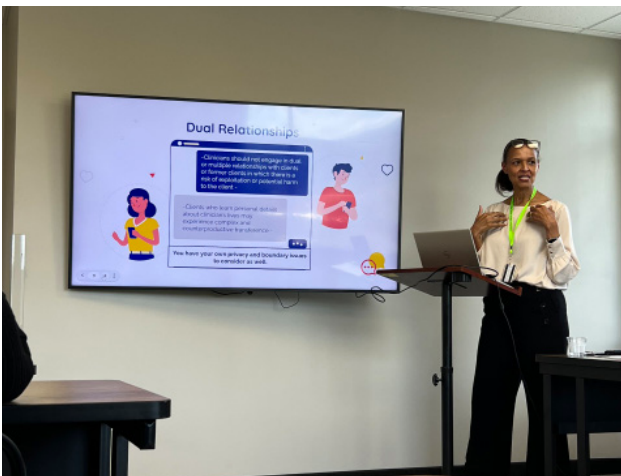
At the beginning of this semester, the Counseling Department hosted its first-ever Counseling Colloquium, “Transformed by the Journey,” which took place over two days. Counseling students were able to attend many sessions and activities, each focused on a different topic in counseling. Some of the areas of focus included wellness, mindfulness, research and writing, school counseling, families, and art. One session included a campus tour for all of the new counseling students unfamiliar with Southern.

Counseling professors taught some of the sessions, as well as professionals from the community. The program received a lot of great feedback, which has encouraged directors to make this an annual addition to the counseling program.



Photo 1: Symposium audience.

Photo 2: Brandon Baughman, PhD



Above: Colleen Mitchell, PhD, speaks on dual relationships.

Below: Professor Tami Navalon hosted an art activity.



Psychology Symposium

Each year the Psychology Department hosts a psychology symposium highlighting one professional area of psychology. This semester, they chose to focus on forensic psychology. Megan Gentry from the FBI presented on trauma-informed care of victims of crime; Brandon Baughman, a neuropsychologist, presented on expert witness psychology; and Caroline Huffaker from the National Policing Institute presented on how psychological science informs policing.

Baughman also hosted a Q&A during the meal, and the symposium concluded with a crime scene game conducted by the Psi Chi officers.



**School of
Education and Psychology**

P.O. Box 370
Collegedale, TN 37315-0370
edpsych@southern.edu
southern.edu/edpsych
423.236.2765

The School of Education and Psychology Introduces Master of Arts in Teaching *continued from page 1*

Overstreet is also thrilled to welcome aboard Jasmine Johnson as director of the MAT program. “[Johnson] is an educator with so much experience. Her core beliefs and reasons for being here highly resonate with the MAT.” Jasmine Johnson, EdD, believes strongly in this program and is already enjoying all of the responsibilities of being a director and professor. When asked what she enjoys the most about teaching, she replied that she loves watching her class sessions progress, hearing in-classroom stories, and figuring out where her students need support and what assignments speak to them the most.

Three students are in the program this year. One student, Heidi Matthews, commented: “I am loving [the program]. It works with my busy schedule, as all classes are online. I prayed about where to go, and God has led me here. The program opened as I was calling Southern about earning my teacher certificate.”

Overstreet and Johnson encourage individuals who have a desire to shape young peoples’ lives to join the MAT program. They are looking for The field of education needs positive role models.

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