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The Power of Monday



Southern's teacher education program welcomed nationally renowned educator Ryan Stein to the campus in October 2021. Stein, who has been recognized as an elite educator and pioneer for student engagement, innovation, and achievement for the past 15 years of his career, was invited to conduct a series of in-class workshops and an evening session, which was open to the school and community. Through his work as both a teacher and a principal, Stein has received multiple awards for excellence in education from 2010 to 2020, as well as having been featured on the Rachael Ray show as a top-five national educator. Stein is known for his enthusiastic approach to teaching and, as part of his mission, he works to spread that enthusiasm to the current and future generations of teachers.

Stein's evening session, titled "The Power of Monday," encouraged educators to reflect on their important role in students' lives. Tammy Overstreet, dean of the School of Education and Psychology, said, "Some students are not so lucky as to have a safe environment at home, so educators should make an effort to create a safe place at school so that students can always look forward to coming back on

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FROM THE DEAN'S DESK

Recently, when I told my 2-year-old granddaughter who was visiting with me for the afternoon that she would be going home soon, she responded, "That makes me really, really sad, Mimi!" She also frequently flashes a beautiful smile at a family member and says, "I wuv you." I sometimes envy the way small children express their feelings freely. Christ told us that being like little children is a condition we need to embrace if we would like to enter the kingdom of heaven, so I thought it might be acceptable for me to tell you about some of the emotions our faculty and staff in the School of Education and Psychology feel about our work here.



Tammy Overstreet, PhD

Overwhelmingly, this work feels hopeful and joyful. When I tell you that our students are a gift from God, I am not speaking in hyperbole. They are intelligent, thoughtful, and creative. They love God and are not content to accept pat answers or to maintain traditions without analyzing them using critical analysis and research. They love each other and advocate fiercely for justice in big and small matters, doing so more for each other than for themselves. They love their community and the people of this world and are not waiting until they graduate to start making things better. They are doing it right now!

One of our psychology students, Tori Waegele, has her own photography business. Her entrepreneurial spirit is in itself admirable. However, there's more. Tori donates a substantial portion of her profits to foreign aid organizations, such as organizations that focus on girls' education

and aid for refugees and displaced persons. Other students volunteer in a variety of capacities in local churches, in the community, and across the nation and world. Several of our students either are currently serving as student missionaries or are planning to do so in the upcoming year. Natalie Hutchins is instrumental in running a support program for Southern's student missionaries and has recently done a Week of Prayer for a small Adventist school nearby. Many of our graduate Education students are currently serving as principals and teachers in schools across the North American Division. Our students make us proud.

We also feel excited. This fall, our new Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program will begin. This degree program will allow those who have already completed a bachelor's degree to become licensed educators who can help meet the ever-increasing demand for teachers, both in public and private schools. A unique aspect of the MAT program is that students who are sponsored by a district or conference can complete their program as job-embedded teachers of record, which allow them to earn a salary during the final phase of their degree program. Next year will also see the start of our adult degree completion program in psychology. Adults (age 25 and older) who have earned 24 or more hours of college credit but who have not yet completed a bachelor's degree can pursue this degree program. Working with adult learners is rewarding.

Our work with students is a blessing to us! Because of this, each semester as we approach graduation, many of us feel a bit melancholy. We become accustomed to seeing our students daily and having our days brightened and our lives enriched by them. When we do not see them regularly anymore, it is tough! However, we feel happy as we look forward to our student dedication, held each year just before graduation. In this ceremony, all graduates from the School of Education and Psychology programs are dedicated to God, prayed over by their faculty members, and sent forth into the world to be the hands and feet of Jesus. If you would like to participate in this special evening with us, be sure to follow us on Facebook or Instagram to see the details. This year, we're meeting in the Collegedale Church on May 7 at 4 p.m.

Thank you for humoring me by allowing me to share some of the emotions we experience here in the School of Education and Psychology. May God bless each of you.

The Power of Monday (continued from page 1)

Monday.” Stein’s message focused on the 65 hours a week that a student is away from the school. For many students, those 65 hours can be an unsafe and very negative experience, one that they must endure over and over. This is why Stein encourages educators to make every second count and make every day important. Georgia-Cumberland Conference Associate Superintendent of Education Kim Thompson, a veteran educator with 22 years of experience, also attended Stein’s evening session. “Teachers don’t always realize what happens to their students between Friday afternoon and Monday morning,” Thompson commented, “They think they know, but it can be so unsettled for the kids. Teachers can be invaluable to the students in the time that they do have them.”

Stein’s message encouraged teachers to interact with their students in meaningful ways. In his school, they have created five different “houses” that the students and faculty are a part of. This creates a sort of familial atmosphere for the students and faculty. Stein’s school has created a culture of caring and a sense of belonging. The teachers encourage the students to remember that they are safe, they are valued, they have a voice and a choice, and that it is okay to fail because they are still learning. One of the school’s mottos is: “Be here. Be you. Belong.”

Stein also stressed how crucial it is to tell students “I see you,” so that they never feel overlooked or unimportant. “I appreciated that he highlighted the importance of ‘seeing’ students and giving them a place to belong,” David Glenn, senior Religious Education major said. “One of the ways that he accomplishes this in his school is by checking periodically to ensure that each student has connected with at least one teacher within a certain time period.

As a Christian, Stein was impressed with the atmosphere and mission of Southern. Stein likes to incorporate his spirituality with his daily life, which includes the way he treats others. One of the ways he does this is by using the phrase, “We must exude what we want to create.” He said this meant that in order to influence students, the faculty and staff must model that influence. Overstreet explained: “[Stein] taught how important it is for students to see that we as educators will try something, even if

we’re not good at it. The students will see us model the behavior of trying, even if we are scared.”

Those who attended Stein’s workshops and evening session were impressed by his mission. When asked what their biggest takeaways were, Thompson replied: “Love first. Teachers and school staff need to make kids feel as though they are a part of something.” Overstreet said, “We are difference makers.” And finally, Glenn commented, “I found that his vision was inspiring, and I could see myself using some of his ideas to increase a sense of student belonging in my own classrooms in the future.”



Photos of students engaging in activities during one of Stein’s in-class workshops.



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How the Pandemic Reshaped the Counseling Program

As students and faculty begin their third year of navigating life in the midst of the coronavirus crisis, some are starting to recognize that an international pandemic can facilitate adaptive growth. The Professional Counseling Program at Southern Adventist University is no exception. The pandemic has forced innovation in programs that require field experience as well as in classroom courses that are unable to meet in person. After two years of troubleshooting, this new way of conducting classes and facilitating students in the field is becoming the norm. Through COVID-19, the counseling program has been able to broaden its horizons.

Originally developed for in-person classes, the professional counseling program has had to shift to the implementation of hybrid or completely online classes. This has opened the door for people who otherwise would not be able to join Southern's counseling program, by allowing students in other states and countries to be able to access classes through Zoom. Students on campus or nearby have the option to attend in-person or online, if it is more convenient for them. Though the shift from in-person classes to online classes had a steep learning curve in the beginning, things finally seem to be running quite smoothly.



A counseling student leads a session using telehealth.

Before the pandemic began, counseling students completed practicums and internships in person, either through Summerour's Center for Counseling and Emotional Wellness or through community-based sites. With the introduction of telehealth, a form of telecommunication technology that allows long-distance client and practitioner care, clients today can attend sessions from the comfort of their homes, and students can still gain experience even if they are in quarantine. Counseling students have had to adjust what they learned about body language and other nonverbal cues to a situation where they only see their client's head. Learning how to interact with clients both on camera and in person has broadened their skills much further than pre-pandemic.

These new experiences with telehealth have brought many benefits, but the changes have not come without difficulty. It has taken a lot of time for faculty and students to adjust and adapt to the pros and cons of teletherapy. Maintaining client confidentiality was more difficult in the beginning, but since then, Southern has secured membership with the appropriate software clients to ensure that client rights are protected and confidentiality will not be compromised.

Thankfully, these adjustments in the program have not seemed to inhibit the success of students. Counseling Professor Tami Navalon said, "We get reports from our community counseling centers where our students are interning [and] they are always so impressed with how ethical, competent, and well-trained our interns are." Navalon remarked on how proud she is of the students, how impressed she is with their caliber, and how committed they are to contributing to the wellness of others through these difficult times.

Of course, these differences in the program have also put a lot of pressure on the counseling faculty, as they have had to adopt an even busier and more stressful schedule. Still, they are excited about the new ability to reach more students and clients. As the pandemic continues to affect practices in higher education, new techniques and innovative practices will continue to create new opportunities and experiences.

Staff Update: Goodbye, Professor Williams

Ruth Williams, PhD, has been fascinated with people for as long as she can remember. She says that she has always been a people person, and also a teaching and learning person. For over 26 years, she shared her talents and passion with students at Southern. Williams, the longest-serving Black professor on campus, has decided to retire. Though she is reluctant to leave the classroom, she says that she has been blessed to work alongside amazing people and is excited about opening a new chapter in her life.

During her time as an undergraduate student, Williams had originally chosen a pre-professional program with a concentration in protozoology, because she was very intrigued by single-cell organisms. However, as a part of her general education, Williams took a general psychology course. This was for her the “eureka” moment when she realized that her true passion was psychology. Williams went on to receive her PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Minnesota, specializing in child psychology and measurement. Williams loves children and enjoys studying how children think and develop. “It is very difficult to build an adult, but you can build a child. If we put the best into what a child needs, then we will have less problems with broken adults.” Williams commented. Though she disliked math as a child, college showed her that mathematics can actually be fascinating. This encouraged her other area of specialization, psychological measurement. Williams loves the quantitative or mathematical approaches to human research, primarily the statistics.

Most of Williams’ professional life has been spent in Collegedale, at Southern Adventist University. After graduating with her PhD, she was offered a position to start teaching at Southern the following semester. Williams spent four and a half years at Southern before she was invited to return to Minnesota to teach at the University of St. Thomas. She spent five years teaching in their psychology program before being asked to return to Southern. Williams felt God calling her to return and help develop a “rigorous” psychology program at Southern. She commented that at that time, there seemed to be a negative association with psychology among Adventists; therefore, the psychology program seemed to be a “last resort” to students. She made it her mission to make a difference in Adventist education. “I wanted people to know that we can be the best— that we can be top-notch and be committed Christians, too. You can



Ruth Williams teaching.

be smart and be a psychologist. It isn’t for people who can’t make it elsewhere.” Williams said.

She believes that the accomplishments of her students have been one of the biggest highlights in her time at Southern. “I consider myself a pair of shoulders,” Williams explained. “What I do is stoop low enough to let my students climb on my shoulders. Then I stand as straight as I can so that my students can see the things I can’t see.” She has loved watching what the students achieve after they have stood on her shoulders.

Even though Williams is leaving the classroom, she struggles with the word “retirement”. Williams does not believe that retiring is biblical. “God commands us to work six days a week and rest on one until you die. You can say you are retiring to something else, but not retiring to do nothing. I’m never really going to retire. I’m just doing something different.” Williams said. What will that different thing be? She has many opportunities to invest her time in things she loves, such as consulting, reading, speaking, writing, laughing, gardening, enjoying the outdoors, making green juice and molasses sandwiches, spending time with her children and grandchildren and students, bladesmithing, and collecting swords (of which she actually owns many!). Her options are endless!

Alumni Spotlight: Psychology

Shanti James graduated from Southern in 2017 with a BS in Psychology with a concentration in Psychobiology. After graduating, James decided that she wanted to pursue a graduate degree and is currently in the fifth year of her clinical psychology PhD program at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. She remembers fondly her experience as an undergraduate at Southern, specifically Professor Ruth Williams' encouragement of self-direction and research. James said: "I had the freedom to pursue my own ideas. I was able to do what I wanted in regard to research." She now recognizes that Southern prepared her for the rigorous endeavor of graduate school. "Something I appreciate most about my undergraduate training was learning and understanding the framework of science— what it is and what we use it for."

Though she did not originally plan to study clinical psychology, it was the result of connecting with a professor in the program on Twitter that led her to pursue the degree. James is enjoying the work she is doing as a PhD candidate. She currently works with a local hospital and maintains a caseload of clients, assessing bariatric surgery candidates and offering outpatient psychological services using a brief intervention model. She referred to her job as "similar to a psychologist in a medical setting." James said that her experience at Southern helped her gain confidence and develop a good intuition for psychological things, which aids her in her work.



James at her job.

When asked what she finds most rewarding in her current roles, James answered: "Therapy is hard, but I keep coming back to it, because it is always so cool to work with an individual and see how their situation changes. Therapy is like a creative exercise between two people. Collaborative, creative, and rewarding to see someone change his or her train of thought."

James remarked on the things she misses the most about Southern; nice weather, a beautiful campus, and the friendly environment.

She also misses the opportunities and resources around and on Southern's campus, such as all of the hiking trails and mountains of Tennessee. A few of the things that James enjoys doing in her free time are reading, going to parks, being with her friends, and going to live music shows with her fiancé, an industrial and organizational Psychology PhD candidate. When asked if she has any advice for current students or those about to enter into a graduate program, she said: "Don't change yourself to try to match the program you want to get into. Trust that being yourself will be the most beneficial for you and the program."



James and her fiancé, Christopher.

How can you help other students like James 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

Education

Professor Krystal Bishop and the students in her Children's Literature course have been studying the importance of book ownership and its impact on reading scores this semester. They decided to put what they had learned into practice. Sarah Kilroy is currently a student teacher in a 3rd-grade classroom at Wolftever Creek Elementary, where the majority of the students may not have any books to call their own. Bishop and her students were excited to give every child in Kilroy's classroom their own book.



Children's Literature students distribute books to children.

The Children's Literature students conducted a short survey to get acquainted and personally chose a book for each child based on the survey assessment. They also wrote a note in each book, explaining the reason it was chosen for the child, and went to the school to present the elementary students with their very own book. The students chose multilingual books for the ESL students and used other criteria to make sure each book had personal value.

Counseling

The research team in the Counseling Department is made up of counseling faculty and counseling graduate assistants. Recently their research has focused on wellness and emotional intelligence as it relates to the developing counselor, certified counselors, and counseling educators.

Graduate students on the research team have also been helping with a number of outreach activities on campus. Some of this outreach includes Mental Health Awareness Week, Meet the Firms, National Depression Screening Day, Stress Out Week, and National Awareness for Eating Disorders. In addition, the team has taken up the responsibility of writing the mental health columns for the *Southern Accent* each week.

Psychology and Outdoor Education

Each year the Psychology Department hosts a psychology symposium highlighting one professional area of psychology. During the Fall 21 semester, they chose to focus on outdoor and adventure therapy. Many different individuals and organizations were involved in the symposium. Ashley Pujol, director of the Tri-State Therapeutic Riding Center, presented on her career in equine therapy. Mindy Brown, supervisor of recreational therapy at Parkridge Valley Hospital, spoke about professional recreation therapy in the community and clinic. Josh Nordean and Chad Savage, director and training specialist at The Forge School, told about the use of experiential therapies at the residential treatment center for boys. Professor Mike Harris and graduate student Elisha Fowler demonstrated the therapeutic applications of ropes course activities.

In addition, Tom Harris and Tatiana Roles from the Youth Villages at Inner Harbor Campus engaged with the audience in a therapeutic drumming workshop and "lunch and learn." A drum performance was then presented by Sesa Wo Suban.



Symposium participants enjoy the therapeutic drumming workshop.





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