



# STUDENT NEWSLETTER

Volume 2, Issue 1  
Fall, 2006

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## THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES!

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Welcome to the second edition of the Canadian Counselling Association (CCA) Student Newsletter—a publication that we hope will be a unique resource for CCA students beginning or on the verge of completing their graduate studies.

The life of a student is never easy. New environments, professors, colleagues and courses can be overwhelming. Wading through the red tape and regulations is a daunting endeavour.

We also know from experi-

ence that the transition from undergraduate to graduate studies certainly means more work and tougher standards.

We at CCA care and want to help facilitate this transition!

For this edition, we have asked students and educators to share their “*pearls of wisdom, their survival tips and their knowledge and experiences on how to survive Graduate School*”.

We wish to thank everyone who submitted articles. Our

selection was based on the criteria of relevance to theme, date received and space. Some of the articles received will be considered for future editions of *Cognica*, since they (cont'd p. 2)



### Surviving Graduate School: One Educator's Perspective

When I think back to my days as a graduate student, I am filled with memories of stimulating classes, extended debates with my student colleagues over coffee, and long days and nights spent in libraries searching for the latest and greatest information on a seemingly endless list of topics that I knew next to nothing about.

In those days – before the Internet and virtual libraries had been invented - our sources of information were much more limited, and required considerable amounts of time and effort to locate. Today, information is available at the click of a mouse, and electronic de-

livery systems have enabled learners to get almost everything they need from the comfort of their own home.

Flexible programming that accommodates a variety of learner situations, alternative modes of course delivery, and electronic access to information have been welcome changes to the graduate education landscape. All have broadened access to learning, and provided opportunities to highly capable individuals to engage in professional development and training. But, it has also meant that more and more students are trying to juggle numerous responsibilities and roles at once,

often being a partner, a parent, an employee and a student all at once. I think that is perhaps the single biggest dilemma facing graduate students today: juggling the different demands placed on them, and attempting to do a good job at each one of them.

Unfortunately, the fact that students are busy people does not change the level of work needed to become competent counsellors. The six things that are most needed are to read, read, read, and to practice, practice, practice.

(cont'd p.3)

## THE TIME OF YOUR LIVES (cont'd from page 1)

dealt with information that could be useful to all members. Other articles will be considered for a possible Student Corner on our website. Stay tuned!

As students, your involvement in future projects would be greatly appreciated. One thing is certain, we were delighted with the response and we wish to thank the counsellor educators and the CCA student representatives for doing such a great job at promoting this Student Newsletter.

On behalf of our President, Dr. David Paterson, our Executive Director, Barbara MacCallum, our Board of Directors and

the Membership Services Committee, "Welcome to CCA".

We are delighted that you have chosen to be a part of the growing CCA family. Please take this opportunity to meet with your local provincial director and find out how you too can get involved at the local level or with one of our different interest or regional Chapters.

We wish you all a successful year and hope to see you at one of our events.

**Happy reading!**

**Maria De Cicco ,  
CCA's President Elect and the  
Chair for the Membership  
Services Committee**



## A Ph.D., is it possible ?

From time to time over the years, I contemplated doctoral studies and twice reached the point of gathering university calendars and programmes. But I lacked confidence to take the plunge. When I thought about a Ph.D. I wondered if it was really possible for a grey haired granny to actively pursue a doctoral programme. The answer is "yes" and I'm here to encourage you to do the same if that has been your dream.

Research carefully the programmes that are available and which offer study in an area in which you might like to work. Talk to other graduate students or professors and get their input. Talk to the person who will be your direct supervisor before you make a final decision. A good fit between student and supervisor is an absolute essential.

### Questions that any prospective graduate student should ask:

1. Is funding available? Get this in writing.
2. Will there be regular meetings with the supervising professor?
3. Has this supervisor had previous graduate students? Is he/she a published academic?
4. What is the average time for comple-

- tion in that faculty? With that supervisor?
5. Is assistance available for grant writing? Getting articles published? Presenting papers at conferences?
6. Will your supervisor cover the costs of your thesis research?
7. Will you have office space? Lab space?

### What is needed to apply to a programme:

1. Excellent references.
2. A well written, up-to-date CV
3. Money. Applications cost \$50-\$150.00.

### What do you need personally:

And so, at the tender age of 58 years I began the long dreamed of road to a Ph.D. Four years later, working full time for the first two years and part-time for the next two, I defended my thesis. My supervisor was very knowledgeable about the type of analysis that I had chosen, she was a well respected researcher, and she insisted on quality work. I count myself fortunate.

Every doctoral student needs a sense of confidence, resiliency, perseverance, a thick skin, a sense of humour, stamina, good health, and a good support system: friends, partner/spouse, family.

What I valued most was the support of my friends and family. My husband had the patience of a saint, a good sense of humour and a ready supply of Kleenex on hand. Some days I used a lot!

Still, some days I thought life must be worth more than being a doctoral student. I had days when I doubted my ability to be an academic and to see this process through but I thoroughly enjoyed interviewing the participants in my study and analyzing the data was interesting and thought provoking.

Would I do it again? Despite the hard work and long hours it is also exciting. The feeling of accomplishment and pride in a job well done cannot be overstated. The day I defended my thesis was one of the most exciting, rewarding days of my life so I encourage you to go for it! If I can do it, you can too.

**Dr. Younghusband is the CCA Provincial Director for Newfoundland and Labrador and is presently employed in the Student Counselling Centre at Memorial University .**



## Surviving Graduate School: (cont'd from p.1)

It seems that many students are only finding enough time to read and to practice what is absolutely required to meet the demands of a specific course.

The starting point for this discussion was the question, "What pearls of wisdom do I have for new students about surviving grad school?" I suppose the most important thing would be to manage one's expectations before beginning the journey. Of course, never having attended grad school before, most students don't know what they don't know. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions:

### It takes more time than you think.

You must be prepared to immerse yourself in practice and in the literature. It is only through these forms of immersion that you will develop confidence and competence, as well as the breadth and depth of thinking that graduate school demands. The old formula, "For every hour spent in class, plan on at least 3 hours out of class" remains pretty accurate. If you cannot see a way to be able to spend that amount of time, you need to reconsider whether or not you are prepared to do what it takes.

### Your courses are only the starting places for your graduate work.

A typical graduate seminar will have about 39 hours of contact time. No matter what the course content, this is not nearly enough time to provide everything you will need. Therefore, you need to think of the purpose of your class time as mainly being to point you in a few useful directions for further independent study, reading and practice.

### Adopt an elastic attitude.

One purpose of graduate school is to force you to confront the ways you think and act. (cont'd p.4)

## Staying in the "Mode" - Tips for Finishing Your Final Project Before it Finishes You



Project/Thesis is yours in all respects- your topic, your creativity, your hard work, your vision, and most of all, your responsibility. As a current Final Project /Thesis owner, I have found that completing my project and staying in the academia mode is the most challenging.

The ownership is a double-edged sword. Completing your Final Project is an opportunity to illustrate your achievements and showcase your area of special interests. However because your Final Project is done outside of the highly structured environment of your course work, it is easy to let time slip by without progress. Staying in the academic

mode is a key element for Final Project completion.

### How to stay in the mode:

1. **Get connected early**-secure a project supervisor, focus on an area of interest.
2. **Start Early**-It can never be too early. Writing your Letter of Intent, completing necessary paperwork and various other unexpected tasks can be time consuming.
3. **Develop** detailed timelines-A Final Project can be a jigsaw puzzle without a picture. Timelines will help you stay focused. Don't underestimate your time.
4. **Use** your Final Project topic as your

topic throughout as many papers, presentations and assignments as possible. This will ensure your research is up-to date and keep you in the "mode" of your Final Project.

5. **Do** as much of your Final Project while you are enmeshed in your classes and practicum's. This may seem like an insurmountable task but it is the key to staying in the "mode". Once your course work and practicum's are complete it is easy to get sidetracked and lose your academic "mode".

**Jennifer Simons, Campus Alberta Applied Psychology Program ,AB.**

## Confessions of an Overachiever?

An e-mail comes across my screen. The CCA's BC Chapter is looking for new Board members. A quick check of my mental calendar, and I fire off a response, expressing my interest and crossing my fingers I'm who they're looking for... I'm in luck! They'll have me.

In the final stretch of my Counselling Psych MA at Simon Fraser University

(no more course-work! Practicum's done!), despite being 6 months pregnant, I find myself regularly seeking out and snapping up opportunities like these. Added to my (imminent) BC Chapter participation are several other volunteer commitments since May. They almost threaten to overshadow



my thesis research and part-time job as a lawyer.

What gives? Am I padding my résumé? Am I craving human contact after spending my days chained to my computer? Is the perfectionism I am studying for my thesis contagious? Am I trying to prove that having a baby won't change anything?

Or maybe, reflecting on what I've observed in my SFU, UBC and CCA colleagues – a drive to get (cont'd p.4)

## Surviving Graduate School: One Educator's Perspective (cont'd from p.3)

Look at the experience as an opportunity for growth and development; be open to feedback and to trying out new things. The program is designed to help you develop competence and explore new ideas; it is not expected that you have it all on entry.



**Find time for other interests and for just having fun!**

### Be fanatical about leisure space.

As busy as things can get, it is critical to build into your life space enough time for other interests and for just having fun. It

is easy to let the grad school experience totally consume you; then you burn out, and you are not much good to anyone. Good enough is not good enough, but perfection is not the goal either. Give it your best shot, but don't expect to be the best at everything.

### Be fanatical about relational space.

Perhaps the greatest thing you will get out of grad school will be the life-long relationships you will develop. Create space to get to know each other and your professors, and

your experience will be all the more rewarding.

**Dr. Kris Magnusson, Associate Dean, Professor, Counselling Psychology Faculty of Education, Lethbridge, AB**



## GRADUATE SCHOOL AT A DISTANCE

When I first heard about the Campus Alberta Program (a distributed learning model of graduate studies in applied psychology) I have to admit I was skeptical. I had questions such as "how can I learn about counselling if I'm taking my Master's degree online?", and "will I be taken seriously in the field with this degree?"

The Campus Alberta Applied Psychology Program is a joint initiative between three Alberta Universities and has been designed to accommodate counselling professionals who are looking to increase their education and qualifications, while allowing the flexi-

bility to continue working full-time. The online portion of the distributed learning model allows flexibility for the time spent in discussion each week; rather than a 3-hour weekly lecture we participate in a discussion forum over the week (which runs from Wednesday to Tuesday). In fact, I found myself spending more than 3 hours most weeks in the discussion forums (often following the

...increase their education and qualifications while allowing the flexibility to continue working full-time.

discussion threads that would have been impossible to continue in a traditional classroom environment). Having the weekend in the middle of our school week was a lifesaver, as I was still working a full-time Monday to Friday workweek. The Summer Institutes and Weekend Seminars built into the program provided valuable face-to-face learning, a chance to connect and network with peers and instructors, and the opportunity to experience a different type of learning environment.

Without the distributed learning model available I wouldn't have been able to return to pursue my studies. (cont'd p 6)

## CONFESSIONS OF AN OVERACHIEVER? (cont'd from page 3)

involved, connect with and help others, and ultimately make a difference -it's a desire to live up to their example.

Since beginning my counsellor education in 2004, I've been struck by the level of commitment of the students, counsellors and other professionals I've met along the way. Never before have I felt so inspired to be a part of something-not just a profession but a community of individuals working tirelessly for both their clients

and themselves. If that makes me an overachiever, I welcome the label!



...not only to be a part of a profession, but a community of individuals.

**Wendy Woloshyn is an MA student in SFU's counselling psychology program, a CCA student member and a new board member of the BC Chapter.**

*To find out more about CCA and how you too can get involved, visit*

[www.ccacc.ca](http://www.ccacc.ca)



## Choosing Your Practicum Setting!

Choosing where to do your practicum is one of the most important decisions you need to make as a counselling student. It will affect the quality of your practice, your areas of competence, and the network with which you enter the profession. Daunted by these considerations, I spent two academic years trying to decide on my placement before making the right decision and having a great learning experience at Simon Fraser University's Health, Counselling and Career Centre (SFU)! In an attempt to save you a similar period of indecisiveness, here are some factors to consider and to ask about when visiting potential practicum settings:

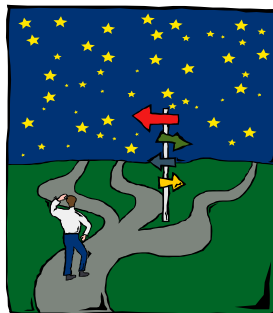
### **Number of Hours**

Often you have a job while studying and it is tempting to go for a setting with a lesser time commitment. However, consider your prospects of gaining Canadian Certified Counsellor (CCC) status or a provincial registration out of the practicum. CCA requires 120 hours of direct client contact for certification. Provincially, for example, the BC Association of Clinical Counsellors requires 100 hours of supervision, including 25 hours of direct observation, to become

a Registered Clinical Counsellor. Consider that not all your time at the practicum setting will count for client contact or supervision hours. Choose a setting where you are likely to get the hours you need, while still being able to meet your financial commitments of course. Some students have been known to combine two practicum settings in order to get their hours and be exposed to different areas of interest.

### **Quality of Training and Supervision**

As someone who had little counselling experience prior to the practicum, it was very important for me to be part of an established program with a formalized training period prior to starting to work with clients. Some of my colleagues, however, had previous counselling experience so didn't mind being thrown in with clients right from day one. A formalized training period and ongoing professional development seminars for practicum students is very enriching, but more experienced students may prefer not to take such a placement as the training time cuts into client contact hours. I also appreciated being in a large setting where there was always someone to



Choosing where to do your practicum, takes time and preparation!

consult if I felt out of my depth; in some settings with only one or two professional counsellors, you might find yourself alone when a crisis erupts. How comfortable would you be with that at the beginning of your practicum?

### **Breadth of Experience**

Have you identified a specialized area in which you intend to practice yet? If

not, a setting such as a post-secondary counselling centre or a community clinic might be useful as it will expose you to a number of different areas. Even if you have identified an area in which you would like to specialize, a more generalized placement may be enriching as it will challenge you to increase your overall skills and open your eyes to new areas of competency.

The first year I was thinking about my practicum placement, I was looking for a placement in career counselling. (cont'd p.6)

CCA requires 120 hours of direct client contact for certification

## COUNSELLOR'S TOOL KIT

"I went to graduate school to learn how to counsel," he said, "but graduate school didn't teach me what I needed to know." "He" was a friend of mine who begrudgingly taught psychology at a small denominational school in British Columbia. My friend felt bitter that his experience at graduate school had not provided him with a bigger tool box of counselling strategies.

He meant this as advice, but it felt more like cynicism. He later confessed that he had expected more from his education, hinting that he wanted graduate school to give him

all the answers to all of his clients' potential problems. My belief is that graduate school should expose you to strategies that will help you find answers rather than giving you all of the answers in a nice, neat box.

### *Tools for a renovation*

This summer my wife and I purchased a new house in Edmonton. It was "new" to us, but had 22 years of its own history. To freshen up the house, we decided to renovate before we moved in. For me, the investment comprised of several thousand dollars, sore knees, blistered fingers and an aching back! By the end

of the third day I wondered if the "do it yourself" budget should have included a doctor's bill?

Left to my own skills, I may have given up when I faced the tough spots but I was wise enough to call in expert help. Fortunately, my home-renovator (aka, stepfather) guided me through the renovation from measuring, to cutting, to finishing. (cont'd p.6)



## Counsellor's Tool Kit (cont'd from p.5)



Just as a home renovation is a collaborative work, so is developing counselling skills.

It was fantastic to have someone who had all of the right tools and knew when to use them. I felt gloomy when we finished and he took his tools home. When I found a few of his tools in my garage, I wondered if I kept the tools, whether they would magically transfer some of his knowledge to me. The reality is that no matter how much I use a tool, it takes time and effort to gain the confidence to use it the right way.

As a counsellor, I recognized early on that graduate school was an opportunity to learn about "life-renovation" from seasoned pros. I learned about what the 'pros' keep in their tool kits (the models), I observed them as they conducted small renovation jobs (the strategies), and even participated in some co-renovations (the practicum).

### *The Counsellor's Crescent Wrench*

One of the first tools I purchased was a good crescent wrench. It is a great tool because that one wrench can be adjusted to fit a variety of nuts and bolts. One of the most useful tools in my therapy tool kit is the crescent wrench I call "feedback." The more I learn about my clients' therapeutic 'size' (their personality, goals and hopes), the better I can adjust to my clients' fit. Feedback is a tool that I will never grow out of using.

Each time I walk on my beautiful new laminate floors, I feel pride. My home has the feel of quality due to a collaborative effort.

My stepfather's skill and my willingness to take his feedback and mentoring allowed me to gain more than a few new tools or tips. I also grew. I am more confident with tools, and I am looking forward to new projects.

Just as a home renovation is a collaborative work, so is developing counselling skills. A willingness to ask for feedback and a desire to be mentored solidify your confidence.

Knowing what home renovation questions to ask can ensure that your project is on target. In the same way, asking the right feedback questions can ensure that your ongoing development reaches your goals.

I use many of the questions below in my work with my mentors, my coworkers, and my clients so they are better able to give me feedback that fits:

#### *For clients:*

- What worked best for you in the session today?
- What part of the session helped you move a little closer to your goals?

#### *For staff/co-workers in a co-therapy or supervision setting:*

- If it were up to you, where would you have taken the session?
- What do you think my goal should be with this family?

#### *For all:*

- If you could add something else to the session, what would that be?
- What is one recommendation you could give that could help me improve how I work with families or individuals like this (or like you)?

**Sean Swaby: teaches, has a private practice and is a Family Counsellor with the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Commission's Edmonton Residential Detox Program.**

## Graduate School at a Distance (cont'd from page 4)

It's a balancing act, but I've managed so far. Even at a distance there is still opportunity to connect with others – in our first course, six of us formed a "study group" that met regularly to discuss the material, assignments, and surviving grad school in general, while still continuing my regular life of full-time work. Although our classes changed we stuck together throughout the program.

As for the questions about how this degree would be recognized...graduates from the program have been accepted into PhD programs, are members of the CCA, and are registering as Psychologists (in provinces where they are able to do so). I've had the opportunity to return to school and have gained so much from being able to pay the time and attention to my studies through the distributed learning model. As the reputation for this program builds (I'm in the third cohort to go through) I'm seeing that this program is not only recognized, but valued and highly regarded.

If you've ever thought about giving the distributed learning model a try, I'd encourage you to look into it. Although there are many spam e-mails about getting your degree online and other such scams, there are also some truly terrific programs out there that just might fit for you.



**Emily Doyle, Campus Alberta Applied Psychology Program Calgary, Alberta**

## Choosing your Practicum Setting! (cont'd from p.5)



Somehow the options available never felt right. The second year, I went for the SFU placement due to the quality of training offered. In that diverse setting, I made my interest in career counselling and workshop facilitation known so as to get some specialized experience but also developed competencies in personal counselling and, since then, have been offered work in the learning skills field. Did a generalized counselling placement prejudice my chance of getting a career counselling job on graduation? Not at all—I got a job counselling and facilitating in a career planning program within a month of completing my Masters!

I hope these tips will help you find a practicum placement that you love. One more thing- while you are busy studying, doing your practicum, and probably working and running a household, don't forget to make time for CCA!

**Ruth Silverman, CCC, is the Chair of the BC Chapter and a Counsellor/ Facilitator at SCCI Project Restart Ltd. in Surrey, BC.**