

JERUSHA DETWEILER-BEDELL: PERSONAL STATEMENT

Engaging in inquiry-based learning is a truly transformative experience for both professor and student. In this spirit of inquiry, I sit in my office on a drizzly Wednesday afternoon and listen to my supervisee describe his struggles with a patient whose panic disorder is so severe that she has become house-bound. That afternoon, I work with supervisees on therapeutic interventions for problems ranging from the frightening (uncontrollable anger, self-injury) to the heart-breaking (severe depression, social isolation) to the bizarre (irresistible compulsions to stand on manhole covers). These are extraordinary cases, not only because of the symptoms described, but also because they are based on carefully-researched role plays, *not* on real patients. My supervisees are not graduate students. Instead, they are undergraduates in my Clinical Psychology course who, prior to starting my class, study an autobiography of a person with a psychological disorder. Throughout the semester they meet weekly with another student, taking turns acting out the roles of patient and therapist. As therapists to their simulated patients, my students apply the empirically supported techniques that I teach them each week. This experience is grounded in my belief that the practice of therapy must be data-driven and supported by demonstrated progress toward clearly-defined goals, as described in my co-authored book, *Treatment Planning in Psychotherapy*. An appreciation of this approach is best learned early, and as research on effective pedagogy makes clear, such learning is a complex process that requires “getting your hands dirty.”

Still, my energies as a professor are focused not simply on students *doing* psychology. My unique strength, and the essential contribution I make to my undergraduates, is to push their active learning beyond mere repetition of lessons typically “fit” for young people. Students must be pressed to discover *new* knowledge. For this, I treat my students not as undergraduates, but as practitioners and researchers in their own right. I challenge them to investigate multifaceted, real-world puzzles, and in so doing they become scholars and collaborators. Critically, however, I ensure that each experience is one that includes barriers to surmount, complexities to disentangle, and perhaps most important, the tools and guidance that lead to ultimate success.

In each of my courses, students design and conduct experiments, participate in small group debates, document behaviors they observe in the real world, and share new ideas with the broader academic community. For example, in Community Psychology, students work throughout the semester in teams, carrying out a systematic investigation of a problem they identify on our own college campus. Students formally survey their peers, interview relevant professionals, write literature reviews, and then design an

intervention incorporating what they have learned. The semester-long project culminates with presentations to campus administrators, faculty, staff, and students (and in 2007 led to a presentation at the Northwest ECO/Community Psychology Conference). Indeed, these projects have contributed directly to changes such as the restructuring of the Career Center and the redesign of the Student Center. Just yesterday I received an email from a 2007 alum who said, "I heard that there is now a 10-year plan to completely re-do the Student Center. It's pretty much our Community Psych project coming to life, which makes me very excited." It makes me equally excited, and emails such as these are part of why I love my job so much.

Beyond the classroom, incorporating students in the design and dissemination of novel empirical research also is central to my mission as an educator. Especially at a small liberal arts college, the distinction between teaching and research is blurred, and the manner in which undergraduates are incorporated into the research process becomes an essential part of their education. Upon arriving at Lewis and Clark College I co-created the Behavioral Health and Social Psychology research lab, which is made up of a number of student-run teams, each consisting of three members – a team leader (an advanced psychology major), a team associate (a mid-level psychology major), and a team assistant (a student new to psychology). Students engage in every aspect of the research process and evolve from novices into accomplished graduate-level researchers. Many projects continue over the summer, and during that time I involve students who might not otherwise have the opportunity to participate in research, including those from community colleges and underrepresented groups. A number of my students have gone directly to doctoral programs in psychology after graduation, but equally important, others apply their experiences as research-practitioners, statisticians, and educators.

I am deeply rewarded in watching my students do the extraordinary, ranging from treating simulated patients to presenting research data. I believe that psychology, like a foreign language, is best learned by immersion – immersion in the context that led the clinician, teacher, or researcher to ask her question about the human mind. I have the perfect job, although I am far from perfect at doing it. I regularly encounter the limits of my knowledge in one-on-one meetings, the classroom, and the research lab, and it is my students who help me to hone my skills as a professor. Each day of my professional life is filled with new challenges, new knowledge, and ongoing attempts to inspire my students to tackle complex problems by rolling up their sleeves and immersing themselves in the process of learning.