Alumna Spotlight

Oluwatoyin Adetunji, M.S, NCC, LPC, LADC

Oluwatoyin Adetunji’s professional journey started in her home country of Nigeria where she gained her undergraduate degree in biochemistry. After moving to the United States in 2005, she continued her education with the slightly different emphasis of mental health at St. Cloud State University. At SCSU she received her M.S. in Community Counseling (now Clinical Mental Health Counseling) and a certificate in Chemical Dependency. More recently, she has started working on her PhD. in Clinical Psychology at Walden University, a goal which she states will be, “a challenge SCSU prepared me well to face.”

Olu is currently the Clinical Supervisor at the new Recover Health location in St. Cloud, a culturally-specific clinic that is making strides in how counselors work with diverse populations in Minnesota. Working at Recover Health allowed Olu to realize her passion for working with the refugee population of Minnesota. The facility itself is set up to better serve clients with collectivist-society needs that creates a welcoming atmosphere in the often uncomfortable process of accessing mental-health services. Recover Health has made it possible for underserved clients to have their mental health, physical health, and practical home service needs met in one location.

Olu credits her experience at SCSU’s Community Counseling Program as part of her success in reaching her goals. The internship she acquired during this time was one of the most impactful because it, “really got me to see what was expected from me in my role and get feedback from my on-sight and SCSU supervisor.” Practicum also helped Olu feel prepared for her profession by showing her, “what the community and profession needs from mental health professionals in the St. Cloud area.” Also, the cohort model of the program is something she still uses for support by connecting her to peers she can reach out to during difficult cases.

Throughout this journey, Olu emphasized how impactful working with refugee populations has been to her profession and personally. She reminds us of the complex trauma this population faces, “I think that welcoming refugee’s to St. Cloud and helping them feel like home is a huge first step to helping their mental and psychical health.”
Sakshi Kapur graduates from the CMHC program grateful for the space and guidance she received. She describes this experience as helping her to find her voice as a counselor.

“I am a counselor of color, first and foremost. What that means to me, and how to bring that work into the world is something I learned in this program,” she says. “I learned how to be the kind of counselor I wanted and needed to be, and not to just follow someone else’s idea about how to do therapy.”

Sakshi’s internship and passion have been in the area of sexual violence. Before it’s closure, she interned at the Neighborhood Development Program and as a graduate student is just completing her clinical internship at the Family Enhancement Center in Minneapolis. She has been brought on as a permanent Therapist and an In-Home Parenting Educator.

“Self care is way so much more important than I realized before,” she said when asked for her advice to future counseling students. “I mean, I work a lot, which means I need to be really clear about how and when I am doing my self care. Otherwise, especially with the kind of clients I work with, I would totally burn out.”

When asked about her favorite part of the program, she said “They could even do more, because I don’t think you can do enough, but the emphasis on multicultural counseling in this program really makes it special. Not only do the multicultural components prepare me to work with a wide range of clients, but they really helped me to personally get through the program. It’s critical.”

Sakshi also participated in her cohort’s mentorship program, where second year cohort members take on first year students as their mentees. Her mentee reports that Sakshi was an incredible mentor.
Kiley Ellingson came the CMHC program as a musician, and she intends to leave as a musician. “Music helps me to think, and to connect to my own feelings,” she says. “It’s a part of how I see the world, and I am learning to bring this passion into the therapy room. I am learning how to connect my clients to music.”

Trained as a bluegrass musician, Kiley plays the bass. With her father, she has been playing bluegrass music from a young age. She continued her musical education in Tennessee, playing in a bluegrass band and touring.

“Music gives you a way to communicate without words, and a way to connect that is really different than talking,” she says.

“I really appreciate how this program has helped me to learn about and develop parts of myself that I haven’t wanted to look at, or have had a difficult time exploring. The faculty are really supportive, and it’s great to be both challenged and supported at the same time.”

Kiley has just accepted an internship position at WLCFS-Christian Family Services in Mankato under the supervision of Dr. Joshua Mears, their clinical director.

“I am really excited to get into this internship,” she says. “I can’t wait to apply the skills I’m learned in the program in a real-life situation.”

Kiley brings an enthusiasm and capacity for self-reflection to this program that her cohort mates deeply appreciate and admire. She is an invaluable asset to the CMHC program.

“Life is an experiment: the experiments you make, the better”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson
Faculty Updates

Dr. Sacin has recently completed her sixth and final year as ASGW co-conference chair. She will continue to be active in ASGW in her new role as membership chair for the national organization. Dr. Sacin is also excited to announce that she is expecting her first child this summer.

Dr. Guo has recently published an article on Crisis Counseling Course with two of our graduate students, Jackie Lok and Alexis Phillips. Dr. Guo also recently presented work at ASGW with Brittney Gotzinger, Nick DeChene, and Amanda Vogel. He’s has also been accepted by the NCACES to present on both the ICD Model with Drs. Merchant and Sacin and on Collaborative teaching with Dr. Wang.

Dr. Merchant recently participated in ACA Governing Council in Montreal and ASGW. She also remains active with the Executive Board, whose meetings she attended this spring in Montreal and Washington DC. At the ASGW conference, Dr. Merchant contributed and participated in a poster presentation on reflecting teams with Dr. Sacin. She is also very happy to just completed a year long Motivational Interviewing training at CentraCare.

Dr. Nichols is in the final stages of an upcoming book chapter that will explain attachment-based therapy interventions for children. The title of the book has not yet been released but will be updated in the next issue of this newsletter.
Five students of the 2017 cohort took the opportunity to attend a workshop on Self-Compassion led by Dr. Kristin Neff, an expert in this upcoming field. The attendees reflected on the experience as one that “changed their perspective on the importance of self-esteem and let me redirect my energy inward to the power of self-compassion with my clients.”

We would like to thank Paige Osmundson for bringing awareness to this workshop and working hard to create excitement for attending the event!
Non-required Reading

Between the World and Me is Ta-Nehisi Coates ground breaking work of creative non-fiction exploring the world of race, identity, white supremacy, and growing up in America. Coates’s personal and incisive voice carves right to the center of our deeply held American Myths, and creates a very special place to see each other, and our selves, from.

Winner of the National Book Award, among many other, this book is not to missed.

Recommended By Dr. Sacin

Eula Biss’s Notes from No Man’s Land is a deeply personal look at race and the structures of racism in society from the perspective os a white person trying to experience their privilege head on. She sets out on this exploration from the starting point of families, especially her own.

Winner of the National Book Critic’s Choice Award, Note’s from No Man’s Land is an essential book for counselors working from a position of relative privilege.

Recommended by Dr. Merchant

Yoshitsune by Ryotaro Shiba
Translated to The Last Shogun” Shiba writes about the end of the Shogunate and the restoration of the Emperor in the 1860s. Shiba focuses his attention on political machinations in the corridors of power. Our hero is the titular shogun Yoshinobu Tokugawa. The story whips along under Shiba’s biographical approach, which includes accounts of meetings, quotes from documents interwoven into a compelling narrative with pillow talk and reimagined dialogue. Yoshinobu is portrayed as a man who is prepared to do whatever it takes to protect his countrymen, even if it means divesting himself of power and wealth.

Recommended by Dr. Guo
A message from ACA president Dr. Thelma Duffey in light of Tennessee’s discriminatory “religious freedom” legislation:

THE ACA 2017 CONFERENCE & EXPO WILL NOT BE IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

May 10, 2016

On April 27, 2016, Tennessee became the latest state to sign into law discriminatory “religious freedom” legislation targeting the counseling profession and LGBTQ community, permitting counselors to deny services and refer clients based on the provider’s “sincerely held principles”—a clear violation of the ACA Code of Ethics.

In light of the passage of SB 1556/HB 1840, ACA members have been very vocal in sharing their opinions on the location of the ACA 2017 Conference & Expo, originally scheduled for Nashville, Tennessee.

After thoughtful discussion and careful deliberation, including taking into account the viewpoints shared by ACA members, the Governing Council made the difficult—and courageous—decision on behalf of our members to move the ACA 2017 Conference & Expo to a venue outside of the state of Tennessee.

We firmly believe that by relocating from Tennessee, ACA is taking a stand against this discriminatory law, and we remain committed in the battle to ensure that this harmful legislation does not spread to other states.

We also pledge to work with the counselors and citizens of Tennessee to raise awareness of the danger of this new law, as well as seek ways to support the Tennessee Counseling Association.

ACA is currently seeking proposals from cities that can accommodate its space and housing requirements for the 2017 Conference & Expo. More information on a new location will be released as it becomes available.

We thank you for your patience and continued support of ACA, and we hope to see you at the 2017 Conference & Expo.

Sincerely,
Thelma Duffey, Ph.D
President
American Counseling Association

UPDATE: It has been decided that the 2017 ACA Conference & Expo will be held in San Francisco, March 16-19.

The students of the first and second year cohorts are very interested in your thoughts about ACA’s decision, and in ways that we as future counselors can further or advocacy and support of those in Tennessee and elsewhere impacted but these kinds of discriminatory policies. Please let us hear your thoughts at <scsu.gcca@gmail.com>.
Professional Organizations

MNCA is pleased to announce their annual American Counseling Association Midwest Region’s Leadership Institute on October 14-16th at the University of St. Thomas is open for registration! The theme this year is “Transformational Leadership: Development of Self and Others through Empowerment and Collaboration”. Please see the MnCA website for more information and registration details.

Elections are also starting to take place for the MnCA executive committee. Please see the website for information on nominations, and also contact information if you would like to get involved. This is an excellent opportunity to make a difference in the mental health community of Minnesota while furthering your professional development.

Stay tuned for more information on this year’s annual conference. The theme this year is “Resiliency”.

CMHC welcomed members of CACREP on campus May 1-4th for a site visit to evaluate the program’s accreditation requirements. Members of both cohorts met with the representatives on the 3rd of May to be interviewed on the program. Results of this meeting will be available in the summer newsletter.

The Graduate Clinical Counseling Association is excited to share how busy we have been this semester! We have had students participate in multiple events including, St. Cloud State's own Ability Event, the National Association of Specialists in Group Work conference, The Beautiful Mind Stand Up to the Stigma Project, Kristin Neff’s Self-Compassion Workshop in the Twin Cities, Somali Night, A LinkedIn Workshop, a meeting with Dr. Rose Stark to talk with us about eating disorders, and presenting at the Student Research Colloquium. As you can tell, GCCA has been busy coordinating events and getting our name out there in the community.

Aside from this semester, the organization has been working hard on our student logo, putting together apparel for GCCA and faculty staff, lining up speakers and events to attend in the fall, and continuously seeking fundraising opportunities. We are also happy to announce that on Wednesday June 8th, from 11:00 AM to 11:30 PM we have a Granite City Food and Brewery Fundraising event, supporting our student organization's professional de-
Concerning MnCA from Dr. Merchant-

“Greetings MnCA member! I’m writing this column to update you on some of the recent American Counseling Association (ACA) Governing Council decisions to relocate the ACA 2017 National Convention. In addition to being an MnCA member I currently serve as the Governing Council representative for the Association of Specialists in Group Work. As such I had the opportunity to deliberate over the decision to relocate the conference.

As you may know, on April 27th, Tennessee signed into law discriminatory “religious freedom” legislation which allows counselors to deny services and refer clients based on the provider’s “strongly held principles”. This law is in clear violation of the ACA code of ethics (Section C. 5) which states that professional counselors may not deny services to a client regardless of the person’s “age, culture, disability, ethnicity, race, religion/spirituality, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital/partnership status, language preference, socioeconomic status, immigration status, or any basis proscribed by law”. ACA committed about $70,000 to fight the legislation in TN and established many coalitions with various organizations and businesses, but in the end the legislation passed both houses and was signed into law by Governor Bill Haslam. This created a dilemma on whether or not ACA would continue to hold its 2017 conference TN. The ACA leadership sought feedback from members through a variety of sources, including a survey that was completed by 3000 respondents.

After much deliberation, the ACA Governing Council made the decision to relocate from TN as a way stand up to this discriminatory law violating our ACA code of ethics. It was decided that in good conscience we could not bring business to TN. Leaving TN, however, does not mean ACA will abandon the counselors and citizens of TN. Instead, ACA has pledged to continue to work closely with the TN Counseling Association and various colleagues to develop an action plan to create awareness on the dangers of this law and to prevent this law spreading to other states.

ACA is currently seeking proposals from other cities that can accommodate the space and housing requirements for the 2017 ACA Conference & Expo. More information on the conference will be released as soon as it becomes available. For further updates please see www.counseling.org/MyVoice.

I invite you to stay involved in ACA. Your participation and voice matters, especially at this critical juncture in history where the counseling profession and its code of ethics are being threatened. Feel free to contact me at nmmerchant@stcloudstate.edu if you have any further questions, or wish to get involved in ACA.”
We were thrilled to be able to attend St. Cloud’s Rehabilitation Counseling Program’s annual “Ability Event”! Attendee’s were able to learn more about the lives, challenges, and social perceptions of persons with disabilities in an interactive environment.

According to the event’s description, this event, “utilizes community volunteers with incredible abilities to guide participants through a range of simulations giving them a better understanding of what it’s like to turn a disability into an ability!”

Paige Peglow, a member of the CMHC program and attendee of the conference reflects on her experience. “Through this event and my past/current experiences with the differently abled population, I will be able to empathize and understand the struggles and hardships sometimes faced when accessing the community. I have always had a place in my heart for those who have different abilities and advocating for their rights to independence and community support. I will continue to advocate and stand up for just and fair experiences for all people.”

Thank you to the Rehabilitation Counseling program for extending the invitation to our program and increasing our knowledge of working with persons with ABILITIES!
Congratulations to the 2016 Clinical Mental Health Counselor Graduates!

Pictured: First Row: Dr. Guo, Carly Waara, Amber Meagher, Kori Guza, Second Row: Dr. Merchant, Sakshi Kapur, Brittany Gotzinger, Nicholas DeChene, Ben Mattson, Third Row: Ho Kwan Lok, Amanda Vogel, Kayla Meyer, Ana Morse, & Melinda Tyson, (Dr. Sacin was in attendance but not pictured)

A special congratulations to all our graduates as we wish them luck on their professional and personal journeys. Many express excitement as they finish their internships, and Sakshi and Kori were recently hired at their site. Carly was also recently hired! Good luck to everyone and their future endeavors!
The Clinical Mental Health Counseling Graduate Program would like to thank all our alumni for their continued support and passion for the field!

If you currently have a job posting or internship opening, please send an email detailing the position to scsu.gcca@gmail.com

St. Cloud State University does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, religion, age, national origin, disability, marital status, status with regards to public assistance, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or status as a U.S. veteran. The Title IX coordinator at SCSU is Ellyn Bartges. For additional information, contact the Office of Equity & Affirmative Action, (320) 308-5123, Admin. Services Bldg. Rm 102.

Follow us on
https://www.linkedin.com/groups/6563903/profile

Find us on:
https://www.facebook.com/CommunityCounselingSCSU

@GCCA_SCSU

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY—CLINICAL MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING