On the Friday before school began, the clinical faculty met in the beautiful surroundings of the new Psychology Services Center. The focus of the discussion concerned the program’s strengths and weaknesses. The strengths that we the faculty identified included the lifespan approach, the strong research and clinical training, a cohesive group of faculty in the clinical area and the department, a focus on societal problems in a great urban metropolitan center, a program with significant interest in biological processes and racial/ethnic diversity, and our junior faculty.

Most of the discussion, however, concerned our weaknesses and how to address them. The fact that few graduates go on to academic positions in Research 1 universities received the greatest attention. Several explanations were offered. One explanation focused on the culture of the program. My understanding of this argument is the following: Given that the program focuses on research careers as the desired outcome, other career options are viewed by the program as much less desirable. The emphasis on academic careers may lead many students to feel that they are not meeting the program’s expectations that then leads to them becoming less invested in the research domain. Another factor that was identified is that the qualifying exam, particularly the literature review, requires a great deal of time, and most students have little to show for it (i.e., there is no resulting publication). Some faculty commented on students’ limited statistics preparation, particularly to help them carry out their second year research projects. Another explanation was that students spend too much time in class and in clinical training and not enough time with their research.

Trying to tie many of these factors together I am proposing a developmental model. Most if not all students come to our program with the goal of developing a career that includes research, whether research will be the focus or partial focus of their career goals. Many students may not get off to a good start in their research. As a result, their passion for research diminishes and they then turn more to a clinical track by focusing on obtaining clinical hours for internship and doing what is necessary to complete the program with less investment in their research activities. As a result, many are not prepared to successfully land a research-oriented job.

To be clear, we have a number of current students for whom this model does not apply. They are developing a strong research background, and should they continue their current direction, they will be competitive for top academic positions. It is our impression, however, that they are the minority.

If this developmental model is correct, then it suggests some avenues for intervention. Helping students achieve success in research during the first 2-3 years is vital. Facilitating the necessary statistical preparation is one way to do so. Helping students reduce the time to prepare their literature review for their qualifying exam is another possible direction. Fortunately that is already happening with the earlier deadlines for passing your qualifying exam (your literature review paper and your dissertation proposal).
The program culture is the area that we discussed the most. There was a general consensus among the clinical faculty that the operationalization of success for our students is not simply achieving an academic position. Clinical science is viewed as an ideology, a perspective taking, one that values critical thinking and evidence in informing ones professional activities. Success then is broadly defined as noted in the Clinical Science Handbook (see for example the 2012-13 version, p. 4).

We have a wide vision of what types of advances our graduates might make. Some graduates might advance knowledge through traditional scientific means, such as journal publications, whereas others might advance knowledge by evaluating and shaping organizations and systems that provide psychological services, by developing intervention programs, by training others who provide psychological services, or by educating the public in ways that promote societal and individual well-being.

What you do with your training is largely dependent on you—whether it is an academic position at a top university, a teaching position at a liberal arts college, a clinician in a medical setting with part-time research activities, or a straight clinical position. As faculty, we see our charge as helping you create your career options within clinical science. On the one hand, the clinical program will be evaluated more positively by the department, the college, the university, and by our peers at like-minded programs if we produce more academic oriented students. Do not forget that we are a PCSAS program. On the other hand, life is short. Students and faculty alike should follow their passion. My hope is that we as faculty communicate an acceptance for a broad operationalization of successful careers in clinical science.

In addition, I hope that students learn that involvement in research and publications will help you not only achieve an academic position. It will also help you obtain that plum clinical position at the VA or within a medical setting. With a strong CV in hand, you will more likely stand out as an applicant for a clinical position in the kind of settings that value clinical science. So even though you may have decided upon a more clinically oriented career path, sticking with your research interests and making the extra effort to publish your quals paper or that extra study that is just short of completion may make the difference in obtaining your desired position.

As director of clinical training I will make every effort to communicate and demonstrate to all students that our program’s main goal is to help you create options for your career, options that reflect the expertise and specialties that you are developing as a member of the USC clinical science family. I encourage faculty and students alike to continuing discussing how best to help students reach their professional life dreams.
Welcome New Students
CONGRATULATIONS!

Amita Tonia Rodriguez was born on August 18, 2014 at Hollywood Presbyterian -- 8lbs 15 oz, 19.5 inches.

CONGRATS RODRIGUEZ FAMILY!

Karan married Aditi Wahi on July 4, 2014 in La Jolla, California.

CONGRATS KARAN & ADITI!
CONGRATULATIONS!

On September 7, 2014, Dr. Gatz saw the marriage celebration of Poorni Otilingam and Paul Lindenfeld at Half Moon Bay. Guests participated in a traditional Hindu Ceremony followed by a Multi Faith Ceremony. The wedding was the occasion as well for a grand reunion including Jenn Dave, Lewina Lee, Ashley Borders, Maggi Mackintosh.

CONGRATS POOMI & PAUL!


CONGRATS MR. & MRS. ROSS!
Clinical Faculty Meetings

Meetings held in SGM-901, 10-11:45.

- Sept. 17th
- Oct. 1st, 15th & 29th
- Nov. 19th

PUBLICATIONS


NSF INFO SESSION

It’s that time of year—NSF GRFP application season! We’re having an information session on **Friday, September 19th at 1 PM, SGM 901**. Lunch will be provided (woohoo!).

The National Science Foundation’s Graduate Research Fellowship Program ([http://www.nsfgrfp.org](http://www.nsfgrfp.org)), is a fantastic fellowship opportunity. It provides three years of generous funding and is an excellent entry into grant funding (not to mention, a fabulous line to have on your CV). All graduate students who are US Citizens, in their first or second year of graduate study, and who do not already have a post-bach degree are eligible (but this last criterion is tricky— for example, if you got a masters 2+ years ago, you may be eligible to apply. Details here: [http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2014/nsf14590/nsf14590.pdf](http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2014/nsf14590/nsf14590.pdf). **Applications are due November 3rd**. Everyone who’s eligible should absolutely go for it!!

The information session will be led by current NSF fellows. We’ll talk about how we applied, share what worked and didn’t work, and answer your questions.