

Alliance to Advance Liberal Arts Colleges (AALAC)
Faculty Workshop Program
Spring 2015
Proposed Workshop: *Health Psychology for the 21st Century*

1. Description

Good health is a key ingredient to participating fully in life. Yet domestically and globally, a number of factors compromise the health of individuals and populations. Typically, factors at the micro-level (genetics, pathogens) or macro-level (poverty, access to insurance) are invoked as causes of health and illness. *Health psychology* offers fresh perspectives by integrating multiple levels of analysis.

A recent Institute of Medicine report indicated that **50% of disease and death in the United States is associated with social and behavioral factors—the core of what health psychologists study**. Health psychologists create and apply scientific knowledge about human behavior to create workable and cost-effective solutions to some of the most pressing social problems of our time, e.g.: serving the aging population; managing rising rates of chronic illness; promoting healthy behaviors; and redressing health disparities by social categories such as race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.

Among undergraduates, interest in studying health is exploding. Students are flocking to growing college-level public health offerings. 2015 was the inaugural year in which a full quarter of the admissions test to medical school (MCATs) covers the behavioral sciences, something unthinkable even a couple of decades ago. These are two indicators that **demand for health psychology courses and research training will only increase in the coming period**. The students we teach at small liberal arts colleges will be involved in every aspect of health and healthcare in the coming decades, as patients, practitioners, and policy-makers. Our students are likely to be over-represented in related graduate studies; thus, as faculty at liberal arts colleges, we are in a unique position to shape the training of a key group of health leaders.

Despite the wide-ranging influence of our sub-field, to our knowledge, **health psychologists from liberal arts colleges across the United States have not yet met formally as a group**. Most health psychologists at liberal arts schools find our annual professional meetings lacking the full expression and integration of our professional identities as researchers, teachers, and mentors of undergraduates. And in contrast to our departmental peers who represent more established areas of psychology, health psychologists face a unique set of issues in socializing our students into the rapidly developing sub-field that sits at the intersection of public health, sociology, and medicine, as well as traditional sub-areas of psychology such as social, personality, developmental, and clinical.

The vision for this workshop is **community development**. Given the novelty of such a meeting, the first order of business is to become acquainted, finding common ground as well as appreciating our diversity in backgrounds, training, and approaches. Beyond that we will share struggles and successes around pedagogy, research—conducting our own and mentoring our students’—and professional development in this quickly changing area. Through these interactions, we will lay the foundation to develop a coordinated network of health psychology colleagues committed to working in our discipline from a liberal arts perspective and to seed future collaborations as dictated by participants’ interests.

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2. List of Faculty Participants

The faculty below have expressed interest in attending a two-day gathering at Smith College, likely to happen June 2016. Asterisks indicate faculty who have indicated interest to assist with planning. Bolded are co-organizers.

AALAC Schools & Faculty -

Amherst - Catherine Sanderson
Bryn Mawr - Laurel Peterson
Carleton - Ken Abrams *
Denison - Erin Henshaw *
Furman - Cinnamon Stetler *
Haverford - Shu-weng Wang
Macalester - Jaine Strauss
Middlebury - Rob Moeller *
Reed - Kris Anderson
Smith - Benita Jackson *
Vassar - Michele Tugade
Williams - Amie Hane *

Non-AALAC Schools & Faculty

Clark - Nicole Overstreet
Claremont (as of July 1) - Stacey Doan
Dickinson - Marie Helweg-Larsen

Tentative Meeting Schedule

Day 1

Morning – *Arrive*
Lunch – *Introductions*
Early afternoon – *Panel, Best practices teaching health psychology #1*
Mid-afternoon – *Panel, Best practices teaching health psychology #2*
Afternoon – *Walk, Break out groups by sub-field (clinical, developmental, social/personality)*
Dinner – *Curriculum exchange*

Day 2

Breakfast – *In triads, by research interests*
Morning – *Panel, Developing a program of research*
Mid-morning – *Panel, Mentoring trainees*
Lunch – *Break out groups by geographic locale*
Early afternoon session – *Next steps*
Closing – *Highlights, Evaluation #1*
Late afternoon – *Departure*

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3. Designated Workshop Liaison

Liaison, Benita Jackson, PhD MPH
bjackson@smith.edu
Associate Professor
Department of Psychology, Smith College
Five College Program in Culture, Health, &
Science

Co-planner, Cinnamon Stetler, PhD
cinnamon.stetler@furman.edu
Associate Professor
Department of Psychology
Furman University

4. Condensed CVs

Please see Appendix

5. *Evaluation and Follow-Up Activities*

- **Evaluation**
 - #1 – Immediately at the end of the workshop, ask participants to identify a highlight and suggestions for future work
 - #2 – One week following the meeting, electronically survey participants on most valuable insights emerging post-workshop and suggestions for future work
 - #3 – Six months following, electronically survey participants for continuing impact on teaching, research, service, and professional development
- **Follow-Up Activities**
 - Submit proposals for **panels on health psychology** scholarship in a liberal arts context to at least two different **national meetings**, to increase visibility and further build network of health psychology colleagues at liberal arts institutions, e.g.,
 - National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology Conference, January 2017
 - Association for Psychological Science, May 2017
 - American Psychosomatic Society, March 2017
 - Develop content for a **column promoting health psychology at liberal arts institutions** submitted to a general academic audience (e.g., *The Chronicle of Higher Education*; *Inside Higher Education*)