

# APSA NEWSLETTER

A publication of the SDSU Applied Psychology Student Association

## Spring 2004

### **SDSU Professor Published in Nature: An Interview with Dr. Matt**

**By Bri Allgire**

Dr. Georg Matt is a Professor of Psychology, advisor for the Applied Psychology program evaluation track and supervising researcher for the SDSU Foundation Measurement and Evaluation Research Group. I recently had the opportunity to interview him about a number of topics, including his recently published tobacco study.

**APSA Newsletter:** Where should I begin? Well, for starters, what brought you to SDSU as a professor?

**Dr. Matt:** I came right out of grad school. I defended my thesis and came to SDSU two days later. When I interviewed for the position, I liked the diversity of the campus. I went to Northwestern for graduate school, a school with a very different population. The students there had nicer cars than the professors. The position in evaluation and measurement at SDSU was the only job offered in program evaluation and measurement that year. I received my Ph.D. in program evaluation at Northwestern University and was the last doctoral student to graduate from the University's program evaluation doctoral program. Northwestern was big in the [program evaluation] field and had attracted some of the best-known scholars. But many of these scholars had names and honors that attracted them to other universities.

**APSA Newsletter:** Now are there many universities with program evaluation researchers?

**Dr. Matt:** There are many researchers at universities who are involved in program evaluation research. However, few program evaluation programs at the Ph.D. level attract many students. The problem is that few students out of college know what program evaluation is, so there doesn't seem to be that excitement for evaluation doctoral programs that there is for programs in clinical or I/O psychology. But there are quite a few Ph.D. programs in program evaluation, located in psychology, education, political science, or policy studies departments.

**APSA Newsletter:** Program evaluation is a sort of interdisciplinary major?

**Dr. Matt:** As a program evaluator, you need to have a different perspective, but you are not at the same level as the people who work in the field you are studying. So yes, program evaluation is interdisciplinary. It's what Scriven called a transdiscipline, integrating theoretical and methodological perspectives from different disciplines.

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### **How to Make the Transition After Graduate School:**

#### **Things You Can Be Doing Now**

**By Keren Brooks & Melissa Feldman**

The following article is the first in a two-part installment series, which offers suggestions that are the combined "wisdom" of several prior SDSU Applied Psychology graduate students. We tried to cover a lot of ground in order to give you the benefit of everything we learned/wished we'd done/did and didn't work/did and actually worked. In this installment, we talk about tips for getting through the program. The second installment contains advice on jumpstarting your careers.

Without further ado, read on for our advice on how to make the most out of your time in graduate school.

#### **The Applied Psychology Program**

**Electives:** When you have a choice among courses, think strategically about what to take. Ask yourself these questions:

- Will it provide you with new skills to add to your resume and/or contribute to your thesis?
- Will it give you a wider perspective into how organizations function?
- Will it help you meet faculty that might be interested in serving as your third thesis committee member?

Contact the professors to talk about course objectives, and ask about the types of projects you'll work on. Courses that involve 'real world' experience or contact are particularly useful. Some past I/O students have found relevant electives in business (e.g., management, finance, human resources), education technology (has applications to training), and public administration (they offer a course on organizational development in the public sector). Look through the whole course catalog for graduate level offerings – you never know what might be there.

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#### **Additional Information**

If you would like additional information on the Applied Psychology Student Association (APSA) or anything discussed in this newsletter, please e-mail Dr. Mark Ehrhart at [mehrhart@sunstroke.sdsu.edu](mailto:mehrhart@sunstroke.sdsu.edu).

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## Summer in San Diego

By Kristen Miller

San Diego...an often dreamed about destination for many seeking freedom from a long winter spent bundled up indoors. At the mention of one of the country's most beautiful cities, faces light up in delight and get lost in thought about the endless possibilities that abound here. A summer in San Diego is at your disposal. The Pacific Basin, laced with shorelines that are marinas, lagoons, clubs, hotels, restaurants and relaxation centers, is your backyard. Even luckier, you are a student who has the summer off from school! Sure, you might be working outside at a café or in an office with an ocean view, but your life is probably devoid of what might otherwise be the 9-5 monotonous grind for many people.

A couple of months of freedom! You've worked hard to get to where you are...why not relax a little bit? Of course you have a thesis that demands some of your time. Okay, relax a little bit, but make progress on your thesis throughout the summer. Perhaps you will create a schedule that entails working on your thesis for an hour everyday. Maybe you promise yourself that you will devote a good chunk of time each week to raking through articles, going to the library, and even starting to formulate ideas for your methods. When your friends invite you to the beach, the next Barbeque, and the next party, you will agree to meet them only after you've put some adequate time into your thesis, right? The plan sounds brilliant, but somehow, next week keeps getting pushed back to the week after that. Before you know it, it is the end of August and do not have anything substantial completed. Though not intentional, a little bit of relaxation can turn into an entire summer of procrastination.

Despite the best intentions, a summer of fun without any schoolwork will cost a Master's student trying to finish within the two-year plan. The consequences of not balancing summer time wisely are likely to lead to a cramped second year of graduate school without much leisure time at all. Many students extend their summer internships into the school year and balance a job in addition to other coursework. Suddenly, the deadlines for graduation become all too clear when faced with impending thesis requirements. Once you actually begin to work diligently on your thesis, thesis advisors who have a more strenuous schedule during the school year are burdened with providing feedback at a more rapid pace. Somehow, course requirements outside of the thesis seem like an added load. Unanticipated thesis revisions stack up at an exponential rate, and you search for articles in the library so often that you begin to feel as if you know the Malcolm Love's indexing system by heart!

The good news is that preparing now can alleviate some of the stress of the second year. I still have not figured out if it is possible to avoid numerous trips to the library, but pacing yourself accordingly can certainly reduce the workload later. Although you may think you will be able to accomplish everything without a problem, it is

better to play it safe and allow ample time for unexpected revisions. It can be difficult to remember that a thesis is an autonomous undertaking. Nobody will watch over you and enforce deadlines; you have to be your own disciplinarian. Having said all of that, hopefully you will heed the advice of a student who did not use that time off wisely. Oh, and of course, have some fun this summer!

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## Peering into the Mind of a 1<sup>st</sup> Year I/O Student, Part 2

By Jon Kochik & C.J. Mohammed

Well, first-years.... we have certainly pleased Starbucks. As soon as the baristas start calling you by your first name after you proceed to order your usual "anything with caffeine" drink, you can officially call yourself a graduate student. After hours of studying, writing, and chugging coffee we have successfully completed the first year of our journey through the M.S. program. Congratulations! It has been a tough yet fulfilling year, but we effectively managed to complete our courses, identify possible thesis topics, and get to know and work with each other on a more personal level. Here were some of the highlights of our first year:

We considered our first-year courses to be the building blocks of I-O theoretical knowledge. Organizational Psychology provided the opportunity to discuss the ideas and findings of the most prominent psychologists and practitioners in the areas of motivation, communication, organizational justice, and leadership. Statistics class usually instilled an intense sense of fear and apprehension in us. Although the concepts and formulas challenged the mind, these exercises furnished us with the skills to organize and analyze any data with which we come in contact. In addition, the Graduate Orientation course with Dr. Price provided an excellent opportunity to inquire about specific issues, learn about thesis requirements, and participate in the baby showers of fellow students. On numerous occasions, we ate so much food that we almost exploded!

The second semester included the "I" side of the spectrum and required substantial time and effort in conducting an actual job analysis and performance appraisal system. Interspersed within these projects were discussions of up-to-date theoretical findings on legal issues in I-O, recruiting, selection, training, etc. Also, we were able to brush up on our presentation skills, even though we still haven't mastered the art of correctly hooking up the projector. In addition, courses such as Program Evaluation and Testing and Measurement also helped us further our knowledge and application in the I-O field.

Although these courses provided excellent information, they were just the beginning of the learning experience in the I-O program at SDSU.

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## Speakers Corner

By Melinda Boyd

The APSA committee sponsors a monthly speaker series for students and faculty. Past speakers have included alumni, local entrepreneurs and well-known researchers. We welcome ideas for future speakers!

### Spring Speakers:

**Dale Glaser**

*Independent Consultant & SDSU Lecturer*

Dale spoke to APSA about his varied career experiences. His background includes an MS in Counseling Psychology and a Ph.D. in I/O Psychology. His interests are in the applied research side of Psychology. He has held full-time positions as a researcher, methodologist, and statistician in health care, marketing, and research firms. He has taken these experiences and parlayed them into his own independent consulting practice.

**Diana Stewart Sanderbeck**

*Global HRD Manager at Nokia*

Diana spoke about her educational and career experiences and how they have enabled her to reach her current position. Diana has over 14 years of experience working in HR/HRD. She attended graduate school at Illinois Institute of Psychology and is ABD in Industrial/Organizational Psychology. She holds master's degrees in I/O Psychology and Human Resource Management and Professional Development. At Nokia she is responsible for areas such as facilitating strategic competency planning, global organizational design, change management, leadership development, succession planning/talent management, 360 evaluations, and technical training.

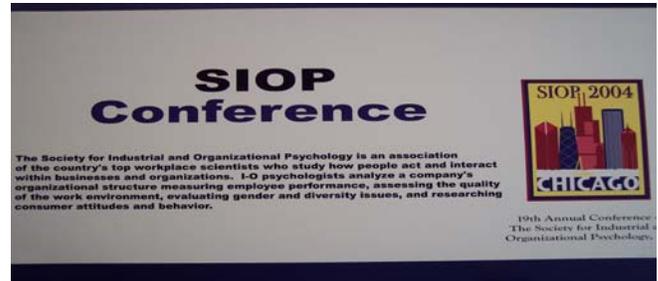
**Matt O'Connell, Ph.D.**

*Director of Technology and Research at Select International*

Matt spoke about his past experiences and his current projects for Select International. He received his M.A. and Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology from the University of Akron and his B.A. in Psychology from Earlham College. At Select he works extensively in designing, evaluating and integrating selection tools into systems to meet the specific needs of clients. He recently co-authored the book, *Hiring Great People*. Over the past 15 years, Matt has designed selection and assessment systems for more than 200 companies in seven countries.

## A Weekend In Chicago

By Christopher Stubbs



The real power of a SIOP Conference is the sharing of ideas, networking opportunities, and its rejuvenating force for those who attend. No matter how much you try, it is near impossible to recall everything you have learned during presentations and symposia at the conference. No matter – just drop your business card in an envelope or hand it to an individual presenting something of particular interest to you and you'll get the paper by e-mail shortly thereafter. Witnessing debates on the validity of personality for predicting performance and discussions of the Supreme Court Affirmative Action rulings, statistical considerations in research and assessment center measurement, and evidence that citizenship performance is comprised of two separate dimensions – OCB and Counterproductive Behavior – have instilled a new sense of purpose to my academic endeavors. What lingers from SIOP 2004 is the motivation the conference has injected into me. The opportunity to discuss research topics with those on the cutting edge, to meet new up and comers, and expand your personal network in the field of I/O Psychology can help breathe new life into your career. You return with renewed vigor to finish lingering projects and jumpstart new ones.



**Professor Jeff Conte presents his poster at this year's SIOP**

The nights out on the town after a day of fruitful discussions and presentations provided an additional feeling for the SIOP conference – one of a vacation. Chicago had much to offer attendees this year. If shopping is your vice, the "Magnificent Mile" was only a few blocks from the Sheraton, the conference hotel.

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## *Transition continued from Page 1*

**Thesis topic & method:** Think realistically about your thesis and align it with your goals – if you want to graduate in 2-3 years, focus your thesis ideas on theories, data collection methods, and analysis plans that work well with your own resources and your advisor's expertise. Of course, you want to be interested in your thesis topic – you will be spending a lot of time on it! However, remember to weigh your interests against your resources. If you choose a topic that is out of your advisor's area of expertise, researching your topic will be more challenging. Choosing an analysis plan that involves statistical methods or programs that neither you nor your advisor know well can also slow down the process. Attempting to do a field study with no concrete 'field,' (i.e., a committed organization from which to collect data) can turn a 2-3 year degree program into 6 years (Trust us, we know from experience!). If you decide to do a field study, it is never too early in the planning process to start trying to secure a data collection source. Also, think about what the organization gets out of this relationship; a lengthy survey that does little to benefit them might not, in the end, yield a large enough sample size for you to analyze.

**Thesis process:** It is extremely useful to know the thesis process beforehand and get to know your resources – this will save time, money, and confusion. Read everything you can get your hands on early in the process and make notes on a timeline. The psychology department, the graduate division, the human subjects office, the thesis reviewer...they all have websites, informed staff, and/or printed materials that are available to help you. Some examples: When you have written a solid draft of your human subjects protocol (formatted according to the specifications outlined on their website), call/email them and ask if one of their staff is willing to give it an informal look before you submit it. A 20-minute meeting with them may provide you with useful feedback before you enter the formal (and often time-consuming) process of getting human subjects approval; this may save you from having to make changes and resubmitting. It also saves them time writing up the suggested changes and reading your resubmissions, and is therefore generally seen as a win-win situation.

The thesis reviewer is often one of the most feared individuals in the process, as s/he is the last step in the process and is involved with many of the legalities of your thesis. For that reason alone, it is important to speak with her/him – describe your thesis, ask how to avoid pitfalls, and solicit general advice. One of the authors of this article would have saved big bucks paying for use of a published survey had she spoken to the thesis reviewer about the issues related to using published surveys for student work. An additional note: Though pricey, having your thesis professionally formatted can help speed things along. The thesis reviewer's website has a list of recommended formatters, and when you use one of them, the thesis reviewer is likely to take MUCH less time

reviewing your thesis for formatting errors. One "do-it-yourself" graduate student seen in the thesis reviewer's office spent more than two months correcting formatting errors. However, this process can take less than a day (legend has it, less than 15 minutes on occasion) if your thesis is professionally formatted. You can keep the price low by doing as much of the formatting yourself as you can do well, so that the formatter has less to do – then choose a formatter who charges by the hour, not by the page. (Note: if you do very little formatting yourself, or have a short thesis, being charged by the page might be a better deal for you).

We hope this advice will save you time, money, and effort. Just remember, you guys are all in this program together – helping each other helps you too. And don't forget to have fun and enjoy your time in grad school. Although it may seem to last forever, it goes by so quickly and before you know it, you'll be starting your career. Speaking of careers, please stay tuned for the second installment in this series where we'll discuss tips for getting a job and things that you can be doing now to help get the job of your dreams.

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## *1st Year continued from Page 1*

Most first-year students had teaching assistantships in either the research methods or statistics classes. We have gained patience (even though we sometimes lost it), and have understood that unfortunately, students will still fall asleep even when you're doing cartwheels at the front of the classroom. However, we were fortunate enough to gain public speaking, interpersonal skills, and training experience, which are valuable in any work setting. Teaching the relevant concepts of research methods and statistics to undergraduate students was also an excellent way to solidify these principles in one's own mind.

In addition to being TA's, we also spent a significant amount of time on research. By assisting advisors in their ongoing research projects, students gained firsthand knowledge of all aspects of research in I-O areas including attraction, cultural issues, leadership, person-environment fit, citizenship behaviors, and stress reduction, to name just a few. Being exposed to these experiences provided a solid foundation in the awareness of the intricacies of conducting research studies in I-O. After two semesters in the program, most students had narrowed down their thesis topic to a list of research questions that can be further developed by way of reviews of pertinent literature and assistance from advisors. Now it's time to get crackin', first years!

So far, graduate school has provided hands-on experience in our chosen field of study, as well as helped us develop broad abilities to persevere and succeed in the face of perceived adversity. Now that we've adjusted to our new lives as graduate students (and perfected our use of the phrase "It depends"), we look forward to our internships and the coming academic year!

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## *Matt Interview continued from Page 1*

**APSA Newsletter:** One of your recent studies was published in *Nature*. Can you give a brief overview of the study and your findings?

**Dr. Matt:** A question that should be asked is how come some studies get publicity in prominent journals but others do not. This study involved an issue that is politically a very loaded topic. Within two hours of the study's press release, a representative from the Missouri legislature contacted me. The Missouri legislature is considering legislation that would allow smoking in childcare facilities when children are not present. The tobacco lobby is everywhere to fight proposals [that limit smoking]. What we found was that when people smoke indoors, the smoke doesn't just disappear; it contaminates the area for a long time. This contamination can lead to second hand smoke exposure; the contamination is still in the house. We had graduate students in psychology and public health go three times through the course of a week to take dust samples, air samples, and wipe samples. Participants were mothers who did not smoke at all, mothers who smoked outside only, and mothers who smoked indoors. About half of the homes with mothers who did not smoke indoors had homes containing toxins and contaminants. A lot of features of indoor settings are reservoirs for contaminants. There are over 4000 chemical compounds in cigarette smoke; some are absorbed very easily, while others are not. If you smoke indoors, it's hopeless – there are going to be contaminants in the home. But if you smoke outdoors only, there is still a chance that those contaminants are entering the home. We actually got funding for follow-up studies involving used cars previously owned by smokers and apartment units previously occupied by smokers, and we will begin these by fall.

**APSA Newsletter:** Are there any grad school survivor tips you'd like to offer first-year or second-year grad students?

**Dr. Matt:** Get out of here! Take advantage of being a student. As a student, you are in a very special position in that there are far fewer external commitments and pressures compared to when you're in the workforce. You need to take advantage of the opportunities to explore. As a student, you're encouraged to try things out in a protected environment. You can grow and learn in this environment, and it won't be held against you; you won't lose your job. What I particularly like about the evaluation track is that we encourage students to take classes outside the psychology department. You get to see that there are other perspectives out there. You get to see what people from other disciplines bring to the table and discover what you, as a program evaluator with a background in psychology, can bring to the table. It helps you have an appreciation for how other fields contribute to human behavioral science, psychology and the workplace.

**APSA Newsletter:** Are there any last words for graduating Applied Psychology students about going on into doctoral programs or entering the workforce?

**Dr. Matt:** Maintain contacts at the university. Professors will remember you, and you have your cohort of students. Those are always contacts that you can rely on later on in your career. Don't sell your textbooks! Hold onto them. Sometimes students complain about this program not being applied enough or being too theoretically based. Theoretical backgrounds help you design studies; they are frames of explanation. Good theories are very, very practical, useful things to have around and to handle complexities you find in the world around you.

\*Special thanks to Dr. Matt for taking the time to share his research and graduate school experiences for the Newsletter.

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## *Chicago SIOP continued from Page 3*

Unique restaurants abounded with quaint and/or exclusive eating experiences, including the famous Chicago pizza. Close to Lake Michigan, the opportunity for riverboat tours provided a new appreciation for the architecture and history of the city. And for sports fans, Wrigleyville – the area surrounding Wrigley Field – was full of different types of establishments offering entertainment and drinks.

SIOP conferences provide a vacation from the ordinary. The "work" during the days at the conference feels unlike work. The evenings provide opportunities for new experiences in a new place. SIOP 2004 definitely lived up to these expectations. I look forward to next year when the conference lands closer to home – Los Angeles – and again provides an opportunity for a vacation from the ordinary.

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**Professors, current students, prospective students, exchange students, and friends at the spring applied program BBQ**