Second Year Interviews: A reflection on their time in the program

By Melissa Oates

What has been your favorite experience or memory of the program?

- I've enjoyed all of us getting together outside of classes. It's great to get out every now and again. - Megan Chappell
- SIOP has been my favorite memory so far. It is fun to be surrounded by people who are interested in the same stuff we are and is a great opportunity to network. Plus, it is a great way to get to travel to and explore a cool city. - Susan Drobka
- Either representing I/O at the SRS last year or doing the applied project at Qualcomm for 722. You would be surprised at how honest the employees can be about their work, bosses, etc. Some of the responses were rather amusing. - Ricky Drake
- Without a doubt my favorite memories from the program have been at SIOP being able to geek out with my fellow I/Oers and bond over our love of I/O PSY with all the students and faculty from the program. - Morgan Da Costa

Over the past two years, what has been your favorite class?

- Psy 721. Lisa is brilliant, the discussions are usually good, and she puts up with my shenanigans from time to time. - Ricky Drake
- I really liked the Advanced Organizational Psych Seminar (722) because it translated most directly to the internship I had over summer. It was nice to see how the skills we developed transferred so well. - Lacey Wilson
- Psy 722 (Advanced Seminar in Organizational Psychology). I especially enjoyed getting to work with an actual organization on a consulting project. - Leah Bressler
- Psy 721 because of the quality of discussion. - Chris Atkinson

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Alumni Spotlight: An interview with Guido Makransky

By Fiona Nguyen

Guido Makransky is a senior psychometrician and occupational psychologist at Master Management International in Denmark.

What do you enjoy most about your career?

The role of a researcher and a practitioner gives me a unique opportunity to influence the developments that are taken within the organization in order to implement innovative
Second Year Interviews (continued from p. 1)

What has been the most effective way to deal with the inevitable challenges and stress of graduate school?

- Remember the reasons you are in the program and the benefits you hope to reap upon receiving your degree. You will have this degree for the rest of your life which will help open doors for you throughout your career and provide you with a unique perspective in any organization you choose to join. - Chris Atkinson

- For me, the most effective way to deal with challenges and stress has been through social support of others in the program, my family, and friends. Also, a good spin workout every now and then doesn't hurt. - Morgan Da Costa

- I've always managed to make time for fun. Although grad school has a tendency to take over your life, it's important to stay connected with friends and family and spend time doing things you love. - Leah Bressler

What is one piece of advice you would give incoming graduate students?

- Work at learning how to manage your time effectively and efficiently early on in the program. Not only will this help with managing all of the work for the program, it will also allow you more free time to do non-school related activities. - Susan Drobka

- In addition to all the knowledge and skills you will take away from this program, use it as an opportunity to build up your network in terms of establishing relationships with colleagues for the future. This will be incredibly important when you need some social support and when it comes time find internships and jobs! Go to all the meetings, conferences, and networking events that you can. It will certainly benefit you. - Lacey Wilson

- Stay organized. I found that this was the best way to handle the many things you have to do. - Megan Chappell

Alumni Spotlight (continued from p. 1)

“LOOKING BACK, I CAN SEE THAT THE GRADUATE PROGRAM AT SDSU GAVE ME A LOT OF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS THAT WERE UNIQUE AND ATTRACTIVE FOR POTENTIAL EMPLOYEES, AND THAT I HAVE USED THROUGHOUT MY CAREER.”

- Guido Makransky

solutions that can give the company a competitive advantage. I like the creativity that is required in order to come up with solutions that provide customers with valid tests within these practical constraints.

What are some differences in what organizations focus on in the US versus Denmark?

There are fundamental differences in the way organizations traditionally select and evaluate their employees. The first is with regard to legal issues. I-O psychology has blossomed in the US because companies are required to have valid selection methods that are legally defensible in court. Companies (not in the US) are not under the same legal pressure. A second is that there is a tradition to measure people on just about anything in the US. Children take tests throughout their education and standardized tests are necessary because there are big differences in the quality of education. In Denmark, education has a higher focus on getting children socially integrated so that they are functional members of society, and standardized tests are not necessary because the quality of education is fairly stable across schools. Traditional selection and evaluation methods in Denmark have a history of being more qualitative with the intention of identifying fit with the company/team.

Any post graduation advice for the 2nd year students?

You probably know more than you think you do. Looking back, I can see that the graduate program at SDSU gave me a lot of knowledge and skills that were unique and attractive for potential employees, and that I have used throughout my career. I would also say take advantage of the exchange program! It’s a great opportunity and it seems like everyone who does loves it - I know I did.
Now that the year is over, the first-year students are looking forward to summer. Looking back over the past year, statistics proved to be a challenging class for all of us, but we have to admit that it was also helpful, and even a favorite for some. Beyond building statistical competence, stats gave skills that increased our ability to think analytically, even outside of the classroom. This class has also been helpful for giving ideas of how to best design a method and analyze data for our theses. In our two seminar classes we learned about the I-side of our field such as training and selection. Our learning activities included reading journal articles, class discussions, and completing group projects such as conducting a job analysis, developing a performance appraisal system, a selection system, and a training system. Through these hands-on learning activities we have gained practical experience teaching us on what it will take to complete a thorough project for an organization from beginning to end, complete with each group overcoming different obstacles that could arise when working in an organization. We have also benefited from our classes not only by gaining relevant knowledge of our field, but have also developed time management skills and the ability to think critically.

The 26th Annual SIOP Conference, held in Chicago, IL this year, proved to be an exciting event for first year students as well. We had a good turnout, with 5 of the 7 first-year students and 5 of the 7 second-year students able to make the trip to Chicago. The conference provided three days filled with various I/O topics in posters, panel discussions, and presentations. Students remarked some of the most enjoyable aspects of the conference included hearing discussions about how to gain and get the most out of an internship, being able to see and meet some of the authors of articles we have read in class, touring “The Windy City,” and of course, Chicago-style deep

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Publications


Note: Names in bold indicate faculty, students, or alumni affiliated with the Applied Psychology program.
The annual Society of Industrial Organizational Psychology (SIOP) conference was held in Chicago, Illinois this year. As usual, San Diego State was very well represented at the conference with 10 Master’s students, 3 faculty members and 2 undergraduate students making the trip. Of course the major draw of attending SIOP is for academic and networking reasons but the chance to visit one of America’s great cities was definitely a plus.

Students had opportunities to see a great number of symposia, panels, and poster presentations, many of which were relevant to their thesis projects. Apart from academically focused talks and posters there were also a number of panels aimed specifically at Master’s students looking to work in applied settings, which were obviously of great interest to several students in attendance. The conference does a great job of providing relevant sessions for both researchers and practitioners. There were also many opportunities for networking through various receptions as well as a designated area where consulting companies and organizations had booths set up with representatives.

Megan Chappell and Susan Drobka were nominated to represent SDSU at the 5th annual Master’s Student Consortium which was held the day before the conference. It was a great opportunity for two students from each university to participate in workshops and a Q & A session featuring successful managers and consultants with Master’s degrees.

There were several SDSU representatives presenting at the conference as well. Dr. Lisa Kath was part of a symposium on stress and workplace safety at which she presented research done with alumnus Ryan Mills. Abdifatah Ali, an undergraduate student, presented a poster on socialization research he did with Dr. Mark Ehrhart and second-year Susan Drobka. Also, faculty member Dr. Jeff Conte was a panelist in a discussion on using personality testing for selection purposes.

Aside from the scheduled conference happenings, there were also plenty of chances for sight-seeing, dining, and live entertainment in the city. This provided a refreshing contrast to the conference at the end of the day and facilitated some quality bonding time amongst the student attendees.

Overall the conference was a great experience for everyone that had the chance to go. It is such a rare and valuable opportunity to be able to hear from and meet with the leaders in the field. I think I speak for everyone when I say it was definitely worth the trip to Chicago. Next year’s conference should be another great one as it is going to be held right here in San Diego.
Spring APSA Speakers

Bruce Griffiths - President and CEO of Organization Systems International

Our first speaker of the semester graduated from the SDSU I/O program in 1977. Bruce first became interested in leadership during the five years he spent as an officer with the U.S. Coast Guard. He spent 30 years working in corporate settings before starting his own consulting firm, Organization Systems International (OSI). The firm specializes in leadership, competency modeling, assessment centers, and 360-degree feedback. Bruce considers OSI to be a mixture of the content of I/O and the process and philosophy of organizational development (OD). Bruce and his staff have worked with a variety of clients, including Disney, Nike, PETCO, Kawasaki, and Wendy's. Most of the projects are related to leadership and selection. Additionally, OSI created their signature Polaris competency cards to aid organizations in developing competency models to be used for interviews, assessment centers, and leadership development. Bruce was nice enough to give each of us our own set of the cards!

Bruce offered us some useful advice for the current students in the I/O program interested in pursuing a career in consulting. He recommended spending some time working internally in order to gain the perspective necessary for external consulting. He stressed the importance of learning about business in order to gain a seat at the strategy table. Bruce told us to have confidence in I/O content and theory. Additionally, he suggested that we adopt OD as a consulting model, even if we work internally. Along with typical advice regarding networking and gaining work experience in the field, Bruce recommended asking a senior professional in your area of interest to be your mentor.

Pancho Aguirre - Competitive Pricing Intelligence Manager at Life Technologies

Our second speaker this semester was Pancho Aguirre, another graduate of our program. Pancho’s first job after the program was in analytics in the Product Management department at HSBC. Although the job was not directly related to I/O, Pancho was able to utilize his strong skills in data collection and statistics to evaluate the company’s culture and politics. After finishing his thesis, he moved to Australia in 2007, where his analytical skills were in high demand. He took a position as a Research and Analytics Manager at Commonwealth Bank in Sydney. His main projects involved statistical modeling to increase employee retention and improve new employee onboarding. After spending a couple years there, he took a four-month sabbatical to travel the world. He managed to make use of connections through SDIOP and landed a job as a Pricing Analyst at Life Technologies. He was recently promoted to his current position as a Competitive Pricing Intelligence Manager. Pancho’s work at Life Technologies involves predicting new customers’ price points. Although he uses some of his psychology knowledge in his job, he would love to incorporate more I/O content.

Pancho shared with us some of the lessons he has learned since graduating from the program. He recommends finishing your thesis before joining the workforce. He also found that analytical skills are in high demand, especially the ability to teach yourself new techniques. Pancho emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for yourself and learning to work with difficult people, especially upper management. Additionally, he recommended joining Toastmasters not only to improve your communication skills but to utilize it as a networking outlet.

Cathy Rossi - Human Resources Development Specialist at Solar Turbines

The final speaker of the semester was Cathy Rossi, a graduate of the SDSU master's program in Program Evaluation. She worked with Dr. Matt on an evaluation of a faculty/student mentor program. Cathy's first job was as a consultant at The Bader Group. Since then, she has been at Solar Turbines for 13 years. The company, a subsidiary of Caterpillar, manufactures gas turbine

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Dr. Vaughn’s research lab at the WPA conference in LA. Second year, Ricky Drake, is in the middle (see right for presentation details).
Cathy Rossi - Human Resources Development Specialist at Solar Turbines

engines and gas compressors. Interestingly, 36% of their employees are outside the United States, making international HR increasingly important. Cathy’s job at Solar Turbines consists primarily of business planning, organization design/change, workforce succession planning, change management, leadership development, employee development, and the employee opinion survey. She enjoys the variety of tasks and exposure to many aspects of the business. Additionally, her job allows her to interact with great people and travel to interesting locations around the world.

Cathy gave us a few helpful suggestions for gaining entry into the workforce. She recommended developing a portfolio of experiences to show off at job interviews, particularly involvement with employee surveys, experience developing a training, or group management experience. Also, Cathy told us that learning another language can often give you a leg up on the competition. The ability to conduct business in another language can sometimes be more valuable than work experience. Cathy mentioned that it has been very helpful for her to show an interest in the business and be able to build relationships. In addition, a willingness to ask questions and address difficult issues while maintaining a thick skin is important in her job.

The First Years’ Experience (continued from p. 3)

dish pizza at Lou Malnati’s. One of our students, Jacob Mraz, even won the raffle for an iPad2! It was fun traveling to Chicago and we look forward to the 2012 conference to be hosted in San Diego.

Although most students of our program traditionally begin their internship during the summer after completing their first year, many of this year’s students have decided to hold off on an internship for now and focus on making progress on their thesis. Not working over summer looks to be a beneficial option for some, while others look to complete their internship and still continue making thesis progress. So far, two first year students have started an internship, one as an organizational development intern with the city of San Diego Public Utilities, and the other in an HR position with The Boys and Girls Club of San Diego.

This was an exciting year for all of us. It has been enjoyable getting to know each other over the past year, developing a bond from when we first met at the incoming student’s reception through now at the end our first year of graduate education. From gatherings at Woodstock’s pizza, study sessions and game nights, together we have developed as a people and future I/O psychologists. We look forward to meeting next year’s incoming students and helping their first year experience, to be as enjoyable as ours has been.
Alumni Spotlight: 
An interview with Steven Yoo

By Fiona Nyguen

Steven Yoo, an SDSU I/O program alumnus who graduated in 2002, is the Manager at SK Academy (SK Telecom) in Korea. He is currently working on are the New Team Leader Training and developing training programs to support new (global) Business Growth.

What aspects of your job are the most challenging?
At work, the biggest challenges are the differences that I find in Korean HRD practices, which go beyond simple cultural differences. I know, how can we actually say that cultural differences are simple, but there are historical and contextual differences that go beyond the “individualistic” and “collectivistic” perspectives that Hofstede talked about. Koreans divide their HRD courses into two major parts: Technical Skills and “Values Training” which includes leadership, corporate values, new employee orientation, etc. I have found that Technical Skills trainings do not differ much between the countries. The Values Training, however, is a completely different matter.

I have learned that Koreans define themselves as “We.” Others heavily influence their individual self, to the point that they cannot construct a sense of being apart (or separate) from those around them. For instance, in their normal conversations the word “we” is used rather than the word “I.” This mental construct of “I am defined by those around me” is very critical when designing a training program to install corporate values into our employees. The program is not so much about the content per se, but more about creating the experience that increases the sense of being part of a greater whole. So the lessons we learned from Instructional Systems Design (ADDIE model) holds lesser practical value in our “Values Training.”

What are some of the I/O related differences in what organizations focus on in the U.S. versus in Korea?
As mentioned earlier, the practice of I/O is focused more on creating a sense of “We” in the employees than increasing individual technical skills. Another thing is that most of the trainees in Korea are very well read. They already know most of the recent managerial books in the press and they attend the classes thinking that they “know” most of what you are about to tell them. The key here is in creating a training program that will move their hearts. It is about the emotional trigger to get them motivated to put into action what they already know in their minds. So designing a program is more elaborate. I need to design dinners (with drinks, of course) into the programs and arrange for late night Karaoke sessions (if needed) to give the participants opportunities to bond as well as learn from the training content.

Any post graduation advice for the 2nd year students?
• While in class, learn your theories well. In the field, you would need to figure out the short cuts. You cannot decide which process to cut unless you have a solid background on your theories and practical applications.
• Get any and all experience you can get. Nothing beats practical experience.
• Find a mentor / coach / confidant that you can ask any question to.
Start planning for SIOP 2012 - it’s coming to us!
April 26-28, 2012

The first SDIOP speaker of the year was Dr. Ron Campbell, president of the Center for Leadership Studies (CLS). The Center for Leadership Studies emphasizes situational leadership theory which combines both task and leadership behavior. Through this approach, Campbell spoke about “Avoiding the temptation to overlead.” According to Campbell, the number one mistake leaders make is confusing employee insecurity for lack of motivation. Employees may appear unmotivated because it is more socially acceptable to appear unmotivated than insecure. Leaders can avoid this mistake by giving the benefit of the doubt to the follower. Similarly, Campbell discussed seven reasons why leaders overlead, and how to avoid this tendency. Reasons leaders overlead include the compulsion to add value to the organization, the need to be needed, and to desire to foster employee dependency. Leaders can avoid this mistake by getting good at asking questions. According to Campbell, good leaders will never let anything out of their mouths that they can get out of their subordinates’ mouths.

The second speaker, Dr. Sheldon Zedeck, is a Professor of Psychology and Vice Provost of Academic Affairs and Faculty Welfare at UC Berkeley. Zedeck’s research was unique because it not only examined the validity of different test strategies for prediction of law school GPA, but also lawyer effectiveness. His multi-year research suggested that the LSAT predicts first year GPA in law school, but does not predict actual lawyer effectiveness. Instead, situational judgment tests, personality constructs, and biodata are more predictive of lawyer effectiveness. While Zedeck feels these results should be replicated, there are large implications for law school admissions. Moreover, these results may influence how law firms hire new lawyers and select lawyers for promotion.

San Diego Industrial/Organizational Professionals (SDIOP) Speakers

Don’t forget to join the APSA Linkedin Group.
For more information, contact Dr. Lisa Kath (lkath@sciences.sdsu.edu)

Announcements

- Ryan Mills and his wife welcomed their second child, Cohen John Mills, on March 23, 2011. He weighed 8lbs 6oz and was 22” long.
- Angelina Sawitzky recently had her second child, Kyle Ivan Sawitzky, on April 22, 2011. His big sister, Natalie, is 22 months.

Thesis Defenses

More fun times at SIOP in Chicago

Above: Dominique Mansell, Andrew Galleta, Jacob Mraz, and Abdifatah Ali

Below: Melissa Oates, Fiona Nguyen, and Leah Bressler

Above: Program alumni Ryan Mills (left) and Zack Girgis also attended the conference.

Below: Jacob Mraz about to eat a slice of the infamous Chicago style deep dish pizza.

Above: Morgan Da Costa, Lacey Wilson, and Leah Bressler stop to grab some Dunkin Donuts coffee, which we don’t have in San Diego!
Students Out and About in San Diego

Left: Students are able to get discounted tickets to the San Diego Opera. Jacob Mraz, Fiona Nguyen, and Dominique Mansell (left to right) took advantage of the opportunity and saw Faust.

Right: Eating in Old Town for Taco Tuesday is always a good time. Lacey Wilson, Morgan Da Costa, Olivia Bustamante, Melissa Oates, and alumnus Zack Girgis (left to right) pose outside Fred’s Restaurant.

Below: (Left to Right), Melissa Oates, Leah Bressler, Dominique Mansell, and Susan Drobka, members of the Leadership Lab, hang out after a successful school year.

Below: Jacob Mraz (left) and Ricky Drake are talented musicians. They performed twice this year at local venues.

2011 Graduation Photos

Above: Dr. Jeff Conte and Stephanie McGinty

Left: Dr. Mark Ehrhart and Susan Drobka

Right: Dr. Jeff Conte and Chris Atkinson
Above: (Left to Right) Lacey Wilson, Leah Bressler, and Morgan Da Costa receive their “Dundie Awards.” This was the first year the program distributed the awards. 
Below: Colleen Conte (Dr. Conte’s youngest daughter) proudly shows her SDSU spirit.

Above: Faculty children always enjoy our semi-annual BBQs and the chance to play together.

Above: This year incoming students to the program were able to attend the event and get to know students and faculty. (Left to Right) Ian Smith and Chris Atkinson, current I/O students, get to know Renee Payne, Brian Mills (current MA student), Berry Soltani, and Ashlee Asgharzadeh.

Left: Current I/O students spend some quality time with Dr. Ehrhart talking about fun times during the previous year. First year student, Ian Smith (right), pretends to be perplexed by his Dundie Award: Most likely to ask about the bottom line. It was well-earned!

A special thanks to Scott Roesch and his family for hosting this year’s Spring BBQ