2014 Summer Teaching Grant Application for Dr. Robinder P. Bedi
IMPROVING THE ADDICTIONS CURRICULUM IN THE UNDERGRADUATE PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR
AND THE GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN MENTAL HEALTH AND SCHOOL COUNSELING

Description of Intended Work: Research, tour facilities, and create liaison relationships with all Whatcom County State Certified Alcohol/Drug Treatment Agencies, including both those County-administered and Tribally-administered. This will also include educating the agency contacts about the role that undergraduate psychology and graduate counseling students can play in assisting these agencies in meeting their organizational objectives and brainstorming ways in which they would be willing to enhance the psychology and counseling curriculum at Western Washington University. It will also include the development of a graduate class on substance abuse counseling for proposal to the Mental Health and School Counseling Programs Committee.

Project Importance: The Psychology Department has already recognized the importance of applying psychological knowledge to understanding addictions, evidenced by creating a tenure-track position with a stated preference for someone with applied substance-related expertise. Upon being hired for this position, I was subsequently encouraged to develop the Department’s first undergraduate class in this area (PSY 470) in 2009. Since then, I have provided almost 40 independent study courses (PSY 300 or 400) to students seeking to obtain additional knowledge and experience in this area, demonstrating the existence of keen and untapped extracurricular interest amongst undergraduate psychology students in the area of addictions.

As part of the Mental Health and School Counseling Master’s Programs’ professional accreditation, we are required to conduct program evaluation surveys every three years for program graduates as well annual surveys of those who have just graduated from either of these programs (reports and survey results available upon request). Unfortunately, education and training related to addictions has clearly emerged as an area of deficiency. For example, in our annual survey of Mental Health Counseling graduates in 2012, 100% of them expressed dissatisfaction in their education related to “Theories and etiology of addictions and addictive behaviors, including strategies for prevention, intervention, and treatment,” and in their training related to “Provides appropriate counseling strategies when working with clients with addiction and co-occurring disorders” and “Screening and assessment instruments for substance use disorders and process addictions.” As another example, in our three year survey of program graduates from 2009 to 2011, our graduates currently working in the field continue to rate these same items as “satisfactory” or “unsatisfactory,” rather than as “good” or “excellent.” Spontaneous narrative comments on all our surveys further indicate that these students can benefit from additional substance-related training and education. At present, we have about five school counseling graduate students who, each year, end up enrolling in the undergraduate addictions class (PSY 470). However, because undergraduate classes are not recognized by our accrediting agency, this is an extra-curricular requirement. Moreover, while the psychology content is highly relevant to their practice, it is missing the key counseling components which are unfeasible to cover or practice because the class is primarily comprised of undergraduates with different professional goals and experience levels. As such, many times, the graduate counseling students do not believe their academic needs in this area are fully being met.

The above information is alarming because both our counseling programs are due up for re-accreditation in 2015, and because the latest edition of the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Programs (CACREP) accreditation requirements lists one core curriculum standard, seven mental health specialty standards, and one school specialty standard (9 standards in total) related to addictions; and will be required to demonstrate that our students are receiving adequate training in this area as a condition of re-accreditation.
Methods/Procedures: 1.) Set up visits/tours of these facilities as well as meet with one managerial and one professional staff at every Whatcom County State Certified Alcohol/Drug Treatment Agency (currently 14 in number, for example, Whatcom County Detox Center, Lummi Chemical Addiction Recovery and Education).
2.) Gather all information obtained above and create a summary manual of Substance-Related Treatment Facilities in Whatcom Country, available for distribution to Psychology faculty and counseling students.

Expected Results/Outcome: 1.) Development of a foundation (e.g., memorandum of understanding) for new internship placements for our graduate counseling students in PSY 670, which will allow them to receive specialty education and training in substance abuse counseling (which is currently not available through any of our existing internship placements).

2.) Creation of a comprehensive manual of substance-related treatment services in Whatcom County, to supplement the supervised training for our counseling practicum students (PSY 570) and internship students (PSY 670) in making appropriate referrals for or providing additional resources to their counseling clients. This manual would contain a description of the organization, contact information, types of clientele served, and programs/services available.

3.) Creation of a list of volunteer and service learning opportunities for undergraduates seeking to supplement their education with professional experience in this area. I expect to incorporate a very significant service learning component to PSY 470 (The Psychology of Substance Abuse and Dependence) and will present the opportunities uncovered or created through the liaison relationships facilitated through this teaching grant. Some examples of opportunities I hope to facilitate include: providing a lecture in a high school class, assisting the counselor in a substance abuse counseling group, co-writing a lesson plan for a substance abuse workshop, interviewing a substance abuse counselor, job shadowing, and doing receptionist/clerical work in a substance abuse counseling office. Professional experience is becoming extremely important in gaining graduate school admission in professional psychology programs and I often advise students to gain such experience prior to applying to graduate school in these areas. The list will be made available to all faculty members in the Psychology Department who undertake undergraduate or graduate advising.

4.) Creation of a verified register of guest speakers who are willing to visit our psychology and counseling classes, particularly those in the Abnormal Psychology series (PSY 250, 351, 451), the Psychology of Substance Abuse/Dependence (PSY 470), Psychopharmacology (PSY 323), Introduction to School/Community Counseling (PSY 359), Health Psychology (PSY 375), Adult Psychopathology (PSY 502), Developmental Psychopathology (PSY 542), Family and Couples Counseling (PSY 558), Professional Practice (PSY 567), Practicum (PSY 570), and Internship (PSY 670). I regularly teach PSY 351, 451, 470, and 570, so can guarantee that these guest speakers will be utilized in at least 4 differences courses. The register will be made available to all faculty members in the Psychology Department.

5.) Creation of a roster of possible field trips related to substance-related treatment, which will be most relevant to the following courses: Seminar in Abnormal Psychology (PSY 451, the Psychology of Substance Abuse/Dependence (PSY 470), Introduction to School/Community Counseling (PSY 359), Health Psychology (PSY 375), Adult Psychopathology (PSY 502), Developmental Psychopathology (PSY 542), Family and Couples Counseling (PSY 558), Professional Practice (PSY 567), Practicum (PSY 570), and Internship (PSY 670). I regularly teach PSY 451, 470, and 570, so can assure that these field trips can become a part of the curriculum in at least these three courses. The roster will be made available to all faculty members in the Psychology Department.
Selected Bibliography


* denotes student co-author