Clinical internship for students enrolled in the MA program

The Leonard Krasner Psychological Center (KPC) offers a 12-month clinical internship to qualified students enrolled in M.A. program in psychology at Stony Brook University (SBU). The goal of this clinical internship is to provide the intern with curriculum and practicum in delivering psychological services, especially psychological assessment, and key administrative and leadership experiences within the day-to-day operations of an outpatient mental health facility.

Updated 05/18/2018

What is the KPC?

The KPC is an outpatient mental health facility affiliated with the doctoral program in clinical psychology at Stony Brook University (SBU). The KPC personnel includes graduate students from the affiliated doctoral program, graduate students/externs from nearby universities, pre-doctoral interns, and post-doctoral fellows, all of whom provide high quality psychological services to KPC clients under close supervision. At the KPC, clinical training bridges research and treatment; as such we keep informed about the most recent developments in psychological research, and only provide treatments that have been proven to be effective through multiple scientific studies and align with cognitive-behavioral approaches. Patients of all ages seek psychological assessment and/or treatment at the KPC for a wide range of clinical problems, including anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, adjustment disorders, stress related issues, couple issues, disordered eating, phase of life difficulties, learning problems, ADHD, childhood problems, family issues, and/or combinations of all these problems. For additional information, please go to our website at http://www.stonybrook.edu/krasnercenter/

What types of graduate training experiences does the KPC internship provide?

The internship includes a wide variety of supervised learning experiences associated with the functioning of a university-based psychology training such as the KPC. These experiences are as follows:

(a) Readings in clinical psychology. Early in the internship, the intern becomes acquainted with basic readings in clinical psychology, including as follows: 1) psychopathology and abnormal psychology; 2) risk assessment (i.e., intimate partner violence, suicidality, and child abuse); 3) ethics (e.g., confidentiality); and 4) basics of clinical interviewing. Seminar-like informal classes will be held during the Summer to discuss these readings and to practice clinical skills (see below).
(b) **Summer training in psychological assessment, phone screening/triage and crisis management.** As one of the primary internship practicum experiences involves conducting phone screens and psychological evaluations/triage with clients seeking services at the KPC, the intern receives extensive training during the Summer months, including shadowing the Assistant to the Director, who manages the front desk at the KPC, and direct face-to-face skills training from key personnel at the KPC, including Dr. Vivian, the Assistant to the Director, the Student Assistant Director, and advanced trainees in the doctoral program.

(c) **Front desk coverage.** The routine front desk activities that take place in an outpatient mental health clinic may include as follows: giving information about the KPC to interested callers; conducting phone screens with prospective clients; writing-up initial phone screen reports on our electronic medical records system; managing crisis; identifying appropriate referrals for clients who are not appropriate for our clinic; registering clients who come in for therapy; and interfacing with other providers, as well as with all the other KPC personnel. These activities implicate a wide range of clinical competencies, including **sophisticated interpersonal skills** (i.e., excellent social and communication skills), **good therapist-patient clinical skills** (e.g., sensitivity, appropriate use of empathy/validation skills, patience, ability to show compassion), **deep sense of responsibility and team work**, **knowledge of psychopathology**, proficiency in **risk assessment and crisis management**, and **good writing skills**. The curriculum and practicum training during the Summer (a – b) are designed to provide the intern with these competencies.

When an intern is deemed ready for conducting phone screens/triage independently (usually after two months of training and supervision), s/he will cover the KPC front desk for periods of time (e.g., two 4-5 hour shifts at different days) and will interface directly with clients who call the KPC or come to the KPC to receive services. **This type of experience provides the intern with broad knowledge and practicum in psychological assessment concerning a wide range of clinical problems and psychiatric disorders treated in outpatient mental health facilities.**

The interns will also be in charge of collecting treatment fees and recording transactions with patients on our electronic medical records software program called Titanium Schedule; **this experience enables the MA Intern to acquire very useful skills in practice management that can be applied to future work in a similar settings or private practice.** Other types of practice related to administrative and public relations tasks (e.g., letters to clients, communicating with CAPS on campus, communicating with other providers in the community) enable the interns to acquire **management and administration skills in mental health.**

(d) **Therapist extensors.** Occasionally, the intern may be asked to assist a therapist in implementing treatment procedures (e.g., role-plays, communication skills training, exposures for social anxiety). These activities are carried out under the direct supervision of a graduate student therapist as well as Dr. Vivian’s umbrella supervision.

(e) **Co-leading groups.** Every semester we offer two or more 10-week groups for the treatment of ADHD, Social Anxiety, and/or Academic Anxiety to SBU students or young adults; typically, they include 4 – 5 participants and are led by two trainees at the KPC. The MA Interns may volunteer to participate in these groups and supervision thereof as junior co-leaders.

(f) **Psychoeducational Testing program.** Interns who exhibit advanced clinical skills and competence may also be trained to administer IQ assessments (e.g. WAIS-IV) under the supervision of Dr. Vivian and other advanced clinical trainees.

(g) **Referrals, PR, and client recruitment.** This aspect of the internship includes updating, researching, and maintain a current list of referrals for facilities, specialized psychological programs, and providers (e.g. pediatricians) in the area. Relatedly, interns are expected to communicate with various
referring entities (e.g., CAPS, Outpatient Child Psychiatry, local school districts) to let them know about services we provide at the KPC (e.g. a new group for ADHD, a new pilot program for pediatric populations).

(h) Participation in outcome data collection with KPC patients. Before treatment begins, we collect information from our patients concerning a number of relevant individual factors and demographics via an electronically-based Personal Data Questionnaire (PDQ). Changes in therapy are also evaluated on a bi-weekly basis from the first session and throughout therapy using an on-line assessment questionnaire called Treatment Outcome Package (TOP); the interns assist the Assistant to the Director in monitoring procedures to ensure that the therapists will reliably administer pre-post evaluations, and TOP weekly ratings.

(i) Participating in setting up and maintaining an outcome database, and conducting research at the KPC. Depending on the interns’ interest and data management skills, they may assist Dr. Vivian and the Student Assistant Director in setting up a data base at the KPC (e.g., review charts, input data) to conduct program evaluation and research. Furthermore, they may also conduct some pilot studies on the utilization of therapy, effectiveness of therapy, factors associated with premature termination. If an intern becomes involved in these types of internship activities, s/he may also participate in submitting IRB applications for research.

(j) Preparing treatment materials for specialized group intervention programs. From time to time, we develop specialized time-limited group interventions based on adaptations of existing evidence-based treatments (e.g., treatment of ADHD with young adults, “healthy kids program,” etc.). We often pilot these programs at the KPC, typically in a group format and for a limited number of sessions. Interested and competent interns can assist the KPC personnel in creating and evaluating the effectiveness of these program (e.g., by conducting reviews of the literature, creating session-by-session hand-outs, designing flyers and brochures, and/or assisting the trainee in collecting outcome data).

Supervision. The interns are directly and continuously supervised by Dr. Vivian as well as other key personnel involved in the MA Internship program, such as the Assistant to the Director and the Student Assistant Director.

Time commitment for the KPC clinical internship

The KPC internship involves approximately 9 - 10 hours of effort weekly, and, due to the necessary training in the initial 2-3 months, the KPC internship starts as soon as the MA program starts (i.e., first week in June). Additionally, due to the fact that the KPC operates year around (except for national holidays), the internship continues for 12 months (including winter intersession and spring break) to the end of the MA program. The interns are required to register for 3 credits in the Fall Semester and 3 credits in the Spring semester (PSY 695, section 23).

*Please note: 1) the interns’ schedule at the KPC is designed to be integrated with and to accommodate their classwork schedule in the MA program; and 2) financial compensation for working during intersession is available.

Additional requirements for the MA Internship

1) Enrollment in PSY 610 (Surveys in Clinical Psychology). In addition to the general readings and practicum training that we provide at the KPC, we expect the KPC intern to be enrolled in a graduate clinical psychology course designed for students in the MA program, PSY 610, which is
team-taught by the faculty in the clinical area. PSY 610 is a 3-credit course and is typically offered in the Fall semester.

2) A brief paper concerning the KPC internship. We require the interns to monitor and keep track of their participation in the various internship experiences at the KPC throughout the year. A brief written paper is due at the end of the internship (about 1-2 pages single spaced) describing the projects and activities that each intern was involved in and the impact of these experiences on his/her professional development and training.

General Information and expectations

Although we provide a wide range of involvements and possible experiences in the course of the KPC internship, we certainly do not expect an intern to be involved with all the experiences/projects included above (a – j); rather, in keeping with our work with present and past interns, we will create a flexible and individualized internship program based on integrating the intern’s interests and qualifications/experiences, while addressing the needs of the KPC.

However, all interns are expected to start their internship by becoming initially involved with the first two training requirements on the list, namely, (a) general and specific readings, and (b) training in phone screening/triage. Additionally, once training is completed, if the interns demonstrates adequate levels of proficiency in the clinical competencies necessary for interfacing with clients, they are expected to be involved in (c) front desk coverage. As stated above, additional involvements will be discussed directly with the intern and tailored to his/her needs, skills, and interests.

Why should I consider this clinical internship?

In addition to any other experience the students may attain as a result of participating in the MA program in general psychology, interns who participate in the KPC clinical internship acquire a broad-base knowledge of psychopathology, sophisticated clinical skills in psychological assessment, experience in running a mental health clinic, and have the opportunity to work side-by-side with psychology trainees at all levels of clinical training. This internship will also increase their knowledge about and facilitate decision-making regarding further professional training and/or employment opportunities in mental health. (See Appendixes A and B.)

- Appendix A: information about the professional outcomes of former MA interns at the KPC.
- Appendix B: excerpts/testimonies from prior MA interns about their experiences at the KPC.

How to apply for the KPC internship

Interested students should contact Dr. Vivian, the MA Internship Training Director, directly (see information below) by sending her a short cover letter expressing interest in the internship (e.g., what they would like to get out of this experience, prior experiences and training in mental health, and reasons why they believe they would be a good fit for the internship) and their Curriculum Vitae. Dr. Vivian will contact all applicants who seem to be a good fit for the internship to set up a face-to-face interview with them.

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Appendix A: Where are they now?

Career updates from current and past interns

‘17-18 Interns:

Malcolm Barker-Kamps, M.A., is a first-year Ph.D. student at the University of Alabama, Birmingham

Kriti Behari, M.A. is a Research Coordinator at Yale School of Public Health in NYC

Blaine DeAngelis, M.A. has been accepted to Hunter College’s Social Work MSW program

Caitlin Kehoe, M.A. is currently applying for research coordinator positions in Boston, MA

Maxwell Moore, M.A. is a first year medical student in New York

‘16-17 Interns:

Jessica Cannone, B.A. is a Research Coordinator at SBU working with Daniel Klein

Shannon Fitzgerald, M.A. is a Research Analyst at SBU working with Fred Friedberg

Nicole Hoehn, M.A., is a Research Analyst at SBU working with Christine DeLorenzo

Stephanie Lawrence, M.A., owns a dog walking business in western Long Island

‘15-‘16 Interns:

Nicole Barle, M.A. is a second year Ph.D. student at SBU

Rachel Bloom, M.A. is graduating with her BSN from the University of Buffalo

Anthony Burns, M.A. is a Research Coordinator at the AARTS center in Chicago, IL

Christopher Kleva, M.A. is a Research Coordinator at SBU (working with Roman Kotov)

Suzanne Vaccaro, M.A. is a second year PhD student at the University of New Mexico

‘14-‘15 Interns:

Loraine Rosenzweig, M.A. is a fourth year Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine student in Pennsylvania

Jaimee Saponieri, M.A. graduated with her MSW from SBU in 2017

‘13-‘14 Interns:

Tony Petruzzella., M.A. is a fourth year Ph.D. student at the University of Georgia- Athens

Jamiesyn Aliano., M.A. is a third year Law Student at NYU
Appendix B:
Feedback from current and past interns regarding their internship at the KPC

-Although not initially my first choice for an internship during the psychology M.A. program at Stony Brook University, the Krasner Psychology Center clinical internship easily proved to be the best experience the program had to offer. More than just an opportunity to overcome my “phone shyness,” the KPC internship provided the chance to gain a first-hand understanding of many forms of psychopathology, as well as develop the clinical skills necessary for interacting with individuals under psychosocial stressors.

-I wanted to tailor my MA program to get as much clinical experience as possible, and the internship at KPC perfectly complemented my research and coursework at Stony Brook, to create what the experience of a first-year PhD student might be!

-These [group therapy] experiences gave me the opportunity to apply my knowledge and training to gain a deeper understanding of cognitive behavioral therapy, and assist individuals in working through their concerns.

-Ultimately, I would encourage incoming MA interns to take advantage of any opportunities to get involved in therapy while at the KPC. Personally, these experiences validated my choice to pursue a career in mental health and answered many questions I had about the therapeutic process.

-This skill set will no doubt be an important supplement to my training as a clinician and researcher for my PhD program in the coming fall. I am grateful for the opportunity I received at the center.

-The absolute highlight of the internship for me was participating in the clinic’s weekly Didactics seminars. Through these seminars, in an intimate and personal setting, I was exposed to experts in their fields, as they presented topics such as working with transgender clients, dealing with issues of SES in therapy, understanding ADHD, treating adults with autism, and using mindfulness in therapy, just to name a few.

-Personally, the aspect of the internship that I enjoyed the most was interacting with the PhD students. Through speaking with them I was able to learn more about the therapeutic process and what it takes to be successful in a PhD program.

-This internship allows you to gain a much deeper understanding of various psychopathologies as well as an inside look into how a psychological training clinic operates. It is also a good way to gain professional skills for future employment. I found my time at the Krasner Psychological Center to be a rewarding aspect of the MA program.

-As an intern, I have been a part of a number of therapy sessions in which I was able to do one-on-one sessions with clients in need of social skills training or who struggled with social anxiety under the guidance of a therapist. This allowed an opportunity to further develop skills such as: establishing rapport with a client, carrying out an exposure, and creating and enacting scenarios with a client.

-Prior to completing my MA program, I secured multiple offers for clinical research positions at a variety of institutions and organizations. I firmly believe my clinical training through the KPC was fundamental in making me a competitive applicant for these types of positions.

-Screening prospective clients over the phone was, for me, the most interesting and informative aspect of working at the clinic. It involves an extensive training process, which equips you with the appropriate clinical knowledge and interviewing skills to ask relevant questions about psychological issues. Reading a textbook or an empirical article about a psychological disorder is one thing, but actually speaking to numerous real patients and patients’ parents gives you an entirely new perspective on psychological disorders. During the training process, you also learn how to conduct various risk assessments, including suicide and interpersonal violence. The knowledge and clinical interviewing skills you learn at the beginning of the internship only grow throughout the year as you gain more and more hands-on experience.