



## *Alla Boara*: Re-arranging and Re-composing Italian Folk Music

## ANTHONY TADDEO

Familial heritage has recently experienced a revised interest with the advent of companies like Ancestry and 23 and Me, especially from younger generations like Millennials and Gen Z. The perseverance of familial history and heritage, however, does not necessarily have to be tied to concrete DNA evidence, which is what aforementioned companies strive to provide through their services.

**Anthony Taddeo**, a graduate student here at YSU who is majoring in Jazz Composition, has taken a different approach in exploring his family's roots through the resurgence of Italian folk music. Raised in an Italian-American family with strong ties to its musical traditions, Taddeo was constantly surrounded by the influences of this national calling to his family's ancestral ties. Although this influence was constant, it wasn't until Taddeo recently discovered folklorist Alan Lomax's recordings from 1954 that made him aware of Italian folk music's wide diversity and strong musical identity.

Taddeo became intrigued and inspired by these recordings' eclectic style, which was much different from the previous Italian folk music he had been exposed to throughout his life. It became apparent to Taddeo that these songs "used instruments, lyrics, and melodies that were deeply influenced by the surrounding countries and they dealt with the struggles and joy of everyday life." The music felt more personal, but also nationalistic—by connecting the communal past with the individual present. As someone who had been studying traditional Italian folk music on and off for the past ten years, Taddeo's discovery of these recordings revealed a surprising missing piece to the puzzle and subsequently exposed his own lack of knowledge about this particular art form. If someone with an extensive knowledge of Italian folk music was not previously aware of this subgenre, then how could others unfamiliar with the genre itself be expected to share this knowledge as well?

Determined to solve this problem, Taddeo embarked on his own research project titled "Alla Boara" which "seeks to compose, arrange, perform, and teach this [Lomax's subgenre of Italian folk music recordings] music in a way that articulates its relevance to the culture and audiences of today." The project would provide a more accessible platform for other Italian-Americans, and even young Italians themselves, to become more familiar with this style of Italian folk music—by bringing awareness to its diversity and potential for creative exploration. To complete this project, Taddeo first wrote a research paper in Dr. Ewelina Boczkowska's graduate research course, which inspired him to make a more serious contribution to this eclectic tradition. For Taddeo, this meant moving his research from the page to the stage, explaining that through "the guidance of Dr. Dave Morgan, I've re-composed and arranged the songs into modern jazz compositions." He hopes that "these compositions inspire Italian-Americans, and by extension, Americans of any ethnic heritage, to take pride in their musical roots and relate to the cultural relevance of this music."

Although Taddeo is set to graduate in the spring, he still plans on furthering his musical ambitions by working as a freelance musician and composer. His band, *Alla Boara*, has hopes of booking and performing across the United States and to one day take the group to Italy. As a fellow Italian-American, listening to and seeing the band perform (<https://allaboara.bandcamp.com/releases>) their more modern rendition of Italian folk music has created a new sense of cultural awareness and respect for a tradition passed down from generations of old. It bridges the divide between native and first-generation ancestors to the current descendants, highlighting the importance of their influence while also revising the rhythm to fit a more telling experience of Italian-American life today. Taddeo's work participates in the evolving hybridity of Italian-American life that is enjoyed by both young and old alike, rearranging and re-composing cultural connectedness itself. ■

## Detecting Data for the Digital Age

## ASTHA SYAL

Whether we like it or not, the internet has become an essential aspect of our everyday lives, both personally and professionally. With the growing number of users running various programs for these purposes, it can become chaotic to manage productivity and performance due to data overload. This can become especially troubling for corporations that use the internet for a large portion of their sales, including Google and Amazon. Not only are these problems frustrating for the industries that depend on them, it also can inconvenience users that shop these sites, causing slower running times and affecting overall performance for their shopping or browsing experience.

To investigate this issue, YSU alum **Astha Syal** centered her thesis titled *Automatic Network Traffic Anomaly Detection and Analysis* on using “Supervised Machine Learning Techniques, which uses a model that can detect traffic over the internet and alert the network engineers before it [the internet] breaks down or reaches a state of ‘Congestive Collapse.’” Preventing this type of collapse “would help network engineers to take necessary measures in order to resolve the traffic over the internet or preserve their data.” This project began in 2018 as a small, investigative enterprise. As time went on, Syal’s research led from one thing to another and eventually gained enough tract to develop into a thesis-worthy paper and topic of discussion.

Working as a graduate research assistant for Dr. Alina Lazar, Syal found even more reassurance to further her research endeavors based on Dr. Lazar’s own research projects in data mining and machine learning. Encouraged and inspired, Syal began working with Dr. Lazar on this project, for which she has won multiple awards and presented at multiple conferences. In 2019 Syal presented and won the competition at YSU’s QUEST Conference, OCWiC, which is a state-wide conference comprised of technology professionals from the industry and academia, the CRA-W grad cohort workshop held in Chicago, Illinois, which is a two-day workshop that provides women with the opportunity to create networks with other graduate computing researchers, and the High Performance Parallel and Distributed Computing Conference (HPDC) in Phoenix, Arizona. Additionally, Syal has also presented and won second place for her thesis in YSU’s 3-Minute Thesis Competition two years in a row.

Syal’s successful research on network trafficking not only gained her recognition during her graduate career here at YSU, but has also rewarded her in her professional endeavors as well. After graduating with her Master’s in Computing and Information Systems (MCIS) in 2019, Syal obtained a job with Medical Mutual of Ohio, first as an intern, and then as full-time developer that includes an 11-month rotational boot camp program which she is currently taking part in. This program will allow Syal to hone her skills by working with various technologies and participating within different teams throughout the company. Syal’s thesis research will also come in handy during this time by providing her with the prerequisite knowledge and skills needed to successfully complete the program required by the Data Engineering Team at Medical Mutual of Ohio.



Astha Syal and Dr. Lazar

Although Syal’s Master’s degree certainly put her on the right path to obtaining a promising career after graduation, it was her own research culminated in the form of her thesis that made her stand out from the crowd. The combination of Syal’s education, her personal drive toward bettering her own understanding of technological infrastructure, and her contributions to IT academia have all contributed to her success. With the ever-changing dynamics of the internet, and Syal’s commitment to bettering IT environments, one can only imagine where her future research projects may take her. So, the next time you log onto the internet and are impressed by its networking capabilities, just remember that it is people like Syal who are to thank for the convenience and efficiency within our demanding technological world. ■

## *Economics meets Philosophy:* Exploring the Limits of How and When People Contribute to the Public Good of Society

BRIAN DURICY

**B**rian Duricy is currently wrapping up his last semester in the Masters of Economics program here at YSU, but doesn't intend to slow down his educational and professional ambitions once he graduates this spring. This should come as no surprise considering his active involvement within the research community on campus. Last year, Brian won first place in the 3-Minute Thesis competition for his research in Game Theory, which focuses on what is called a 'public goods' game. A good example of a 'public good' would be a neighborhood of people with small children continuing to vote for a school levy while their children are still in school, but voting against it once their children have left. At that point the 'public good' of the levy becomes no longer useful to the people of that community, and therefore they see no need to utilize its benefits. Brian's experiment attempts to measure this phenomenon by creating hypothetical situations in which participants are asked to choose between varying 'public goods' options, which will produce a diverse number of results that measure certain cognitive processes behind these choices.

Brian has also submitted this research to and presented it at YSU's QUEST conference in 2018. Not only is Brian extremely active within YSU's graduate program, his aspirations and proclivity for research reach far beyond the confines of Youngstown, Ohio. As a reward for his first-place status in the 3-Minute Thesis competition, Brian received a travel grant and will be putting that money toward preparing for the opportunity to present this research, in combination with his master's thesis, at a future conference of his choosing.

Brian's participation in attending conferences not only provides him with an educational platform to present his research to an audience that resides within the same academic stratosphere, it also helps build up his resume for the nine PhD programs he has already applied to. These programs are scattered across the country and stretch from California to Long Island, although his dream school is Cal Tech, for their social sciences program. When asked about some of the other programs he applied to, Brian also expressed a particular interest in Stony Brook University, a school in New York that holds an International Game Theory conference every year. What's even more encouraging is that one of their panels seems to directly correlate with the research that Brian is currently undertaking, to which he expressed that, "it would be insane to have my paper presented there...these are the people I want to work with."

It's exciting and encouraging to see students so enamored with what they're studying, and Brian is no exception. His ambition to further his academic career through his research and the limitless potential for his future research as a PhD student will cultivate not only solidifies his commitment, but also expands his horizon as he explores these new frontiers. ■



*Brian Duricy, appears second from left*

# Whose Knowledge Counts? Looking at Epistemological Equity in Multilingual Educational Settings

DR. NICOLE PETTITT

Turn on any TV, listen to any radio station, or scroll through any social media platform and you'll be reminded of the controversial climate within the U.S. surrounding the topic of refugee resettlement and migration. While the country often appears split in its attitude toward and response to the worldwide refugee crisis—with some choosing hostility, others compassion—polemics do not address the everyday challenges and obstacles newcomers face in terms of finding ways and spaces to belong in their new communities within the U.S. To address this issue, groups such as resettlement workers, educators, community leaders, and scholars, including YSU's **Dr. Nicole Pettitt**—one of the professors within the English department who teaches Linguistics and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)—have dedicated their time to helping these newcomers navigate their new communities through both personal efforts and academic research. During the Spring 2020 semester, Dr. Pettitt intends to further the conversation on this topic by fulfilling a Research Professorship she was awarded surrounding the topic of epistemological equity in multilingual educational settings. For novice readers, epistemology is the study of knowledge, and it addresses certain questions—how is knowledge created? what are the conditions for making a knowledge claim? who has the right to make knowledge claims?—and many more. Previous educational research shows that there are a number of diverse epistemologies brought to classroom environments. This can be particularly true in multilingual classrooms, where language minority students tend to be overlooked in terms of how they construct and contribute knowledge to educational settings<sup>1</sup>. Previous research further supports this point by maintaining that educational curricula tends to have a Eurocentric bias<sup>2</sup>, which means that the diverse knowledges of multilingual and minority students often becomes overlooked. If these diverse knowledges are recognized and given equal footing, then the academic success for multilingual and minority students can improve drastically<sup>3</sup> by de-centering the Eurocentric bias to include a more comprehensive canon of representation.



Dr. Nicole Pettitt

Dr. Pettitt, along with colleagues in Finland and Minnesota, plans to extend this research by exploring how diverse knowledges are acknowledged and either considered legitimate or de-legitimate on a moment-by-moment basis in multilingual classrooms. An example of legitimizing knowledge might come in the form of verbal affirmation, whereas an example of delegitimizing knowledge could be seen through someone rolling their eyes, folding their arms, or remaining silent within the classroom setting. In addition

to either affirming or neglecting claims, there is also a struggle over the question of “Whose knowledge counts?” presented in pre-determined curricula such as textbooks. For example, a U.S. history textbook may discuss aspects of the Mexican-American war, but those discussions may only center around the progress and economic growth this provided for the U.S. Although this may be historically accurate, it silences the effect that the war, and its aftermath had, and continue to have, on Mexican, Mexican-American, and Indigenous groups. Positing these historical events from multiple perspectives within the classroom setting provides an occasion for open discussions where the opportunity for equal knowledge and participation from all students becomes possible.

The first step in Dr. Pettitt's research, and which she has spent the spring semester working on through her Research Professorship, has been to publish a comprehensive literature review on the topic of epistemological equity. For Dr. Pettitt, this literature review is only the first step in a larger, collaborative research process, which includes data collection in multilingual classrooms. Findings will ultimately be presented and published with the goal of providing guidance for the professional development of practicing and pre-service teachers. Additionally, Dr. Pettitt will also use this literature review to support applications for two external grants in order to help fund her data collection and analysis.

Dr. Pettitt's passion for this research project—and more broadly, her commitment to newcomers to the U.S.—stems from her experiences as part of a bilingual, mixed-status immigrant family, in addition to the linguistically and ethnically diverse neighborhood and schools she attended in her hometown of Minneapolis. This passion only continued to blossom through her work within the field of language teaching and learning, and the realization that newcomers' English proficiency does not guarantee they will escape the often-persistent marginalization immigrants often face within broader U.S. society. It is here that Dr. Pettitt wishes to stress that prior research indicates that social inclusion is a two-way street. It relies not only on newcomers' efforts to learn the language(s) and cultures of their new communities, but, perhaps more importantly, the willingness of long-term residents to create receptive and welcoming environments.

With this type of ambition, it's hard not to be inspired by Dr. Pettitt's aspirations for both her own research and the commitment she has to incite social change. When thinking about your own interactions with refugees, immigrants, or other

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*Dr. Nicole Pettitt continued*

newcomers in your own community, whether in-person or through a screen, take a moment to stop and think about your role in creating a more welcoming environment, even if it's as simple as telling someone to have a nice day. Although this may seem like a small gesture, when combined with the work of others, it can dramatically increase efforts to shift the current sociological climate surrounding epistemological equity and social inclusion more broadly. ■

<sup>1</sup> Moll, Luis C., et al. "Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms." *Theory into practice* 31.2 (1992): 132-141. González, Norma, Luis C. Moll, and Cathy Amanti, eds. *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. Routledge, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Banks, James A. "The canon debate, knowledge construction, and multicultural education." *Educational researcher* 22.5 (1993): 4-14.

<sup>3</sup> McIntyre, Ellen, Ann S. Rosebery, and Norma González, eds. *Classroom diversity: Connecting curriculum to students' lives*. Vol. 88. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001.

Ball, Jessica. "As if Indigenous knowledge and communities mattered: Transformative education in First Nations communities in Canada." *American Indian Quarterly* (2004): 454-479.

# Rebuilding and Reinvestigating the Environmental Conditions of Ohio's Mentor Marsh

DR. SURESH SHARMA

In 1971, Mentor Marsh, Ohio was declared the state's first nature preserve along the Lake Erie shoreline for its rich and diverse plant and animal life. However, this landscape has endured a detrimental blow to its ecosystem over the past fifty years as a result of salt-mine tailings that were dumped into Blackbrook Creek during the 1960's<sup>1</sup>. In an effort to restore this damage, the Cleveland Museum of Natural History began collaborating with local ecologists in 2004 to implement recuperative measures, which to some degree has proved effective and encouraging. In addition, the EPA filed a lawsuit against the Osbourne Concrete and Stone company in 2013, for which an agreement was reached in 2019, and requires the company to conduct a five-year cleanup process of the area totaling \$10.6 million dollars<sup>2</sup>. Although there have been signs of the redevelopment of native plant and animal species in the area, there is still much to be done in terms of completely ridding the environment of any further lasting implications from the damage inflicted by the salt mine.

Contributing to this dilemma is YSU's own **Dr. Suresh Sharma**, an associate professor of civil engineering, who became interested in Ohio's Mentor Marsh in 2014, when a colleague presented him with an opportunity to contribute to developing research within the area. Inspired, Dr. Sharma officially began his own Mentor Marsh research project in 2016, with funding from the University's Office of Research, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Ohio Sea Grant, and Lake Erie Protection Fund. The EPA awarded Dr. Sharma a total of \$187,959 for a three-year continuation of this project, which ended in 2019. During that time, Dr. Sharma, along with two current YSU graduate students, Pravakar Khadka and Rajesh Bhatt, developed and continue to develop methods for investigating the salinity of Phragmite growth based on the streamflow of the marsh tributaries like Blackbrook and Marsh Creek.

In order to accomplish this goal, Dr. Sharma and his colleagues have worked toward developing a hydrodynamic model that has helped to predict the path of movement in the surface salinity of water. Rajesh explains that this is accomplished through "the continuous measurement by SMEC-300 soil sensor probes installed at nine critical locations. Similarly, the spatial and temporal mapping of Phragmites and soil salinity variations is performed through Remote Sensing (RS) indices and GIS techniques from satellite images." Tracking this salinity is crucial to understanding the lasting implications of salt-mine dumping because the marsh typically does not have that much salinity to begin with, since Lake Erie is a freshwater basin. Considering these tributaries have already yielded high salinity results, and due to their inability to flush this growth, it has become vital to track the movement of salinity to see if its development stems from lake tidal influence, or is a leftover consequence of the salt-mine deposits.

This has become the main concern for Dr. Sharma's research within the Mentor Marsh area. He has recently submitted a proposal advocating for the investigation of whether the salinity will be completely eliminated, as a result of the lawsuit agreement between the EPA and Osbourne Concrete and Stone company. The reason for this investigation is to account for the already-present levels of water salinity that will still affect the marsh ecosystem even after the cleanup and removal of the salt-mine has been completed. Although this removal will prevent any further deposits within the marsh, it does not and cannot address the current amounts of water salinity, which during this time can possibly travel to the marina and into Lake Erie, potentially causing even larger issues.

Dr. Sharma's enthusiasm and commitment to the detrimental effects that the high levels of water salinity have inflicted on the marsh ecosystem have awarded him recognition with YSU's Research Awards Luncheon last year. His research more broadly has granted him nine Research Professorships, beginning in 2015 and spanning through 2021. His inclusion of students within this project has also presented them with opportunities to further their own career ambitions. Pravakar has stressed the invaluable knowledge and skills that this research project has provided for him, and he plans to use his involvement with this project to help aid his future professional endeavors. Similarly, Rajesh expresses his interest "in the study of water resources and environmental engineering," and how working with Dr. Sharma will provide him with the opportunity to further his own academic goals. Rajesh's involvement with this project has also awarded him recognition from YSU's Diversity Scholarship this spring. Dr. Sharma's involvement with the marsh, along with his enthusiasm of including students in more hands-on educational projects, has encouraged him to think about applying for further funding with the National Science Association (NSA), which would provide opportunities for research experiences directed at undergraduate students.

Ultimately, Dr. Sharma's goal for this project is to share his data with other departments, which could be useful in establishing lasting, positive contributions to Ohio's Mentor Marsh. Collaboration with other departments would foster a more comprehensive understanding of the marsh's ecological problems since Dr. Sharma's involvement with the clean-up project is limited to hydrology. The marsh is an extremely diverse ecology of plant and animal life that could immensely benefit from the involvement of other professional fields, and he encourages these departments to contribute to not only a greater knowledge of the area, but also take part in a local project that cultivates environmental reform. ■

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*Dr. Suresh Sharma continued*

<sup>1</sup> Cleveland Museum of Natural History. "Mentor Marsh & Carol H. Sweet Nature Center." Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, [www.cmnh.org/mentor-marsh](http://www.cmnh.org/mentor-marsh).

<sup>2</sup> McCarty, James F. "10 Million Settlement to Help Restore Salt-Polluted Mentor Marsh." Cleveland, The Plain Dealer, 4 Jan. 2019, [www.cleveland.com/metro/2019/01/10-million-settlement-to-help-restore-salt-polluted-mentor-marsh.html](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/2019/01/10-million-settlement-to-help-restore-salt-polluted-mentor-marsh.html).

## The Benefits of Extending Project PASS to Math

DR. PAM EPLER

I think most people can collectively agree that education—and by extension the academic success of students both on the primary and secondary levels—is a paramount factor that aids in a community's ability to prosper and grow. Student academic success not only aids in their ability to continue their education and future career prospects, but also provides an economic incentive for their community, and encourages people to send their children to that school district. Although each community may have different means by which they achieve this success, they ultimately all work toward a common end of improving their respective educational spheres.



*Dr. Pam Epler*

Here in Youngstown, we have our own means of implementing educational revision into our school system. Perhaps one of the better known and successful achievements is Project PASS, which seeks to “improve the overall reading ability for Youngstown City Schools (YCS) 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades through small group tutoring and reading interventions implemented by Youngstown State University (YSU) students.”<sup>1</sup> Although this program is a welcomed innovation within the Youngstown City School district, it is limited in its single-subject approach to reading. This problem is currently being addressed, however, by YSU's **Dr. Pam Epler**, who is an assistant professor in the Beeghly College of Education. Dr. Epler proposes that the current model of Project PASS could also be utilized to foster educational growth and improvement for the subject of math. In addition, instead of solely focusing on elementary students, this new project would adhere more to middle grade and high school students, who arguably are dealing with more complex and diverse issues of educational disconnect, in terms of mathematics.

Dr. Epler has been working toward this goal for about a year now and hopes that the fruition of this project will help local students improve their mathematic academic scores. She argues that, although reading proficiency is an important aspect within the educational setting, math too holds an equivalent weight that is increasingly overlooked in terms of educational improvement. In order to fulfill this aspiration, Dr. Epler is currently working toward applications to help fund this project. with the hope of eventually publishing her research on this topic within the academic community. The benefits of presenting and publishing this project will help spread the word of the impact it will have on local school districts whose students need additional and effective math tutoring.

Dr. Epler's previous involvement within the educational research setting has firmly grounded her in the professional sphere of education, both domestically and abroad, with her research primarily focusing on special education and intervention specialty. She has presented research at a total of nine conferences, including ones in Canada and Ireland. In 2019, Dr. Epler presented her research project titled Using Personalized Learning (PL) with Students with Exceptionalities in Dublin, Ireland at the Ireland International Teacher Conference. Her first conference presentation, which was in 2012 at the International Conference of Education (CICE) in Guelph, Canada, was titled Using Response Intervention (RtI) to Promote Student Success and draws similar parallels to her 2019 project, and the project she is currently working on. There is a thread of dedication to intervention specialties and educational reform tied to Dr. Epler's work, and her commitment to this cause creates a new level of resonance for her latest research on local mathematical intervention. Not only does this help in bridging the divide between academic discourse and practical application, it also creates lasting and effective change for both the students and the community. ■

<sup>1</sup>“Project PASS Objectives.” YSU Project PASS, Youngstown State University, [projectpass.weebly.com/about.html](http://projectpass.weebly.com/about.html).



# Challenging Perceptions of Preparedness in Treating LGBTQ Patients

JACOB K. RASEY AND  
RYAN MORTON

Graduate students **Jacob K. Rasey** and **Ryan Morton**, enrolled in the Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) program here at YSU, are challenging the status quo in how cultural competence is perceived by their fellow peers. Rasey and Morton outline that the term 'cultural competence' refers to the "training health care professionals to learn how to treat a variety of patients regardless of nationality, race, sexual orientation, and more." With the growing and ever-shifting identity of our country, it becomes increasingly necessary to create an inclusive environment for all cultures so that they can have equal representation and care without the fear of discrimination. One of the ways to assess the accuracy of cultural competence is to measure current students' educational practices before they even enter the workforce. This is exactly what Rasey and Morton, along with the help of their professor Dr. Weiqing Ge, have set out to do in their own research project titled: *Physical Therapist Students' Perceptions of Preparedness to Address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health*.

The inspiration for this project stems from a Language, Culture, and Health class they took in 2019 with Dr. Weiqing Ge. As part of the course, students are invited to share their own cultures with one another to provide real-life examples of encounters they might face in their professional careers, instead of simply learning about diversity and culture through a PowerPoint slide. This hands-on approach not only provides for a more enriched educational environment, but it also creates a more personal bond amongst students who share their life experiences with one another. Students are invited to bring in objects that represent their culture and share them with the class. Morton's object was the pride flag, and he explains that, "For me, as a member of the LGBTQ community, I brought in the pride flag and discussed about my own experiences as a member of the LGBTQ community to share insight with my cohort about different struggles and perceptions of the LGBTQ community."

Part of Dr. Weiqing Ge's course also encourages students to participate in their own research projects, and after Morton's presentation, Dr. Weiqing Ge suggested that he, along with Rasey, work together to investigate some of the issues Morton outlined. In order to accomplish this, Dr. Weiqing Ge proposed that it would be interesting to see how physical therapy students perceive people who identify as LGBTQ through a survey, which asks students about their attitudes, comfort level, and formal training with LGBTQ students across the country. Considering that 4.5% of the U.S. population identifies with the LGBTQ community<sup>1</sup>, it is important to create better advocacy for this community that will hopefully decrease animosity. This advocacy will also help increase resources for specific healthcare needs this community may need, but which health care providers, specifically physical therapists, might not necessarily have the tools to address.

Although the results of their survey strongly suggests that overall (81%) students believe it is responsible for health care providers to

care for LGBTQ patients, many believe that their institutions have not adequately prepared them to actually care for LGBTQ patients in a professional environment<sup>2</sup>. Only 2.8% of students strongly agree that their educational training has prepared them for care of LGBTQ patients, whereas 33.7% of students disagree, and 45% of students do not believe that that their school has incorporated LGBTQ content into courses<sup>3</sup>. Based on these results, Rasey and Morton concluded that, while students may feel comfortable with treating LGBTQ patients, they do not feel that their educational training has provided them with the resources to prepare them for these types of encounters in a professional setting. The implications for these results suggest that more educational LGBTQ content needs to be incorporated into classroom settings across the country, so students can become better future healthcare professionals.

Rasey and Morton's research is groundbreaking. They have explored a topic that has not been previously discussed within research pertaining to physical therapy studies. With this research, they hope to facilitate a discussion of implementing more educational LGBTQ-related content into physical therapy programs. They also hope to encourage an open dialogue with various professors within YSU's physical therapy department about the importance of implementing more practice cases with diversity. Their research for this project has awarded them recognition with YSU's Diversity Scholarship this year, and they plan on presenting their findings at YSU's QUEST conference. They also have submitted a manuscript of their research to the Journal of American Physical Therapy Association. This research will surely help their pair's professional goals, with Rasey's looking to become a sports/orthopedic specialized physical therapist, and Morton a neurology specialist. On a larger scale, though, their research will contribute to a global discussion on cultural competence, diversity, and equality rights that extend beyond the limits of the classroom and plants new seeds of development within our community. ■

<sup>1</sup> Newport, Frank. "In U.S., Estimate of LGBT Population Rises to 4.5%." Gallup.com, Gallup, 27 March 2020, news.gallup.com/poll/234863/estimate-lgbt-population-rises.aspx.

<sup>2</sup> Morton, Ryan, et al. "Physical Therapist Students' Perceptions of Preparedness to Address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health."

<sup>3</sup> Morton, Ryan, et al. "Physical Therapist Students' Perceptions of Preparedness to Address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health."

<sup>4</sup> Morton, Ryan, et al. "Physical Therapist Students' Perceptions of Preparedness to Address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health."

<sup>5</sup> Morton, Ryan, et al. "Physical Therapist Students' Perceptions of Preparedness to Address Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Health."

# Helping Those Who Help Others – Grant Money Provides More Opportunities for Nursing Students

DR. VALERIE O'DELL

Many university students, whether enrolled at the undergraduate or graduate level, struggle with balancing the demands of school, work, and a social life during their academic careers. Because of the increasing costs of higher education, most students find that they must obtain either part- or full-time jobs off campus in order to help alleviate many of the financial burdens placed upon them. Although working outside of the academic setting may be a possibility for many students, especially undergrads, graduate students often find it more difficult to dedicate time outside the classroom to job commitments, due to the high volume of work required in these programs. This is especially true for students seeking master's degrees in health care programs, where significant amounts of class and clinical time are needed to complete their degree.

**Dr. Valerie O'Dell**, DNP, RN, CNE, a professor and the MSN (Master of Science in Nursing) Program Director here at YSU, has developed a solution to this problem by obtaining federal grant money through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to be put toward students' tuition. It is estimated that about 34% of Nurse Anesthetist students enrolled in the master's program per year receive the benefits of this funding, which is officially titled the Nurse Anesthetist Traineeship Grant, and is open to both first- and second-year students, with the option to renew. As the program continues to increase in size, from about 45 students to around 60, this funding becomes even more crucial in helping the program expand by providing more financial opportunities to prospective students. Since its inception, this project has generated over \$148,000 in federal grant funding for students in the MSN Nurse Anesthetist program at YSU, and it is Dr. O'Dell's hope that those numbers will only

continue to grow within the upcoming years.

What's even more important is that Dr. O'Dell's aspirations for this project have not gone unnoticed. In fact, she was awarded for this project last fall at YSU's Annual Research Awards Luncheon, which strives to recognize YSU faculty and staff who have generated a significant impact on university research activities. Not only does this funding provide more opportunities for students to pursue certain post-level graduate degrees, it also "aims to increase the number of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) providing care, especially to rural and medically underserved populations." Additionally, Dr. O'Dell stresses that, "Many of our students will practice in medically underserved communities after graduation." The phrase 'medically underserved' is used within the medical community, and according to Dr. O'Dell refers to "populations which are disadvantaged because of ability to pay, ability to access care, ability to access comprehensive healthcare, or other disparities for reasons of race, religion, language group or social status." The financial assistance that this project offers provides more students with opportunities to enroll in these types of programs, and enriches the community with more trained professionals able to help others who are at a disadvantage. ■



Dr. Valerie O'Dell



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