

Trainer's Forum

Periodical of the Trainers of School Psychologists



Internship Training: Would You Work Without Pay? Almost Never

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Crespi's (2004) article, "Internship Training: To Pay or Not to Pay, Employment and/or Education" addresses the complexities of internship training and by extension, professional development. I find myself at odds with several of Crespi's positions; particularly, his contention that, "salaried internships can, sometimes, compromise education and training goals." I believe that paid internships benefit graduate students, teachers, the profession, the children and families we serve, and are needed to encourage gender and ethnic diversity in the field—especially at the doctoral level.

School Psychology Internships: Quantity and Remuneration

No one really knows how many school psychology internships exist (at both the doctoral and nondoctoral levels) and there is no central organization, similar to APPIC (for doctoral-level clinical psychology internships) that gathers information on all school psychology internships in the United States. The most approximate attempt is Division 16's, *Directory of Internships for Doctoral Students in School Psychology* initiated by Dr. Joseph French at Pennsylvania State University.

The 2004 Division 16 Directory has data on 414 full time and 22.5 half time internship positions at approximately 91 sites across the United States (*Directory of Internships for Doctoral Students in School Psychology*). While this figure might seem encouraging, it is also misleading because 38 of the 91 sites are either in medical centers, clinics or hospitals and quite a number of them are APA-accredited internship sites which makes them fair game for doctoral students in clinical and counseling psychology. In addition, while the Directory lists 15 paid internship sites in Florida, Texas

and Illinois, most states do not have any formal internship sites listed in the Directory. Obviously, school psychology internships probably exist in all states. For example, I am aware of a significant number of school internships for both doctoral and non-doctoral level students, with stipends, in New York State alone.

The Division 16 Directory lists 53 school-based and consortium internship sites. Thirty-nine have a stipend—ranging from \$55/day to \$30,000 (median of \$18,000)—and 14 sites have no stipend. By contrast, the 38 "clinical" internships in the Division 16 Directory have stipends ranging from \$12,000 to \$22,600 (median of \$17,500).

If Crespi is correct, then the 39 sites with paid, doctoral-level, school-based internships may be compromising the interns' training while the 14 non-paying sites are doing a splendid job. I believe a more reasoned approach needs to be taken and we need to accumulate data to provide an empirically-based conclusion.

What about clinical psychology? The 2004 APPIC Directory listed 589 agencies that offer 2581 full time slots—2176 slots were APA-approved. Of these only 57 were unfunded (2.6%). The mean stipend for all 2581 positions was \$19,400. The stipends range between \$800 and \$65,000. In addition, four school districts have APA accredited internship programs and offer 23 funded full time positions (Salary range is \$18,000-\$38,500). Two non-APA accredited school districts are listed. They offer six positions with stipends ranging from \$12,000 to \$14,600.

While 2.6% of APA-approved slots are not funded, "APPIC discourages unfunded internships but does not specifically prohibit

them when the absence of a stipend is clearly stated at the time the position is offered and accepted (both verbally and in writing). If unfunded positions are offered, training resources should be sufficient to afford the same training as fully funded positions." (http://www.appic.org/about/2_3_8_about_policies_and_procedures_unfunded.html).

In summary, I am not aware of any comprehensive listing of both doctoral and non-doctoral level school psychology internship opportunities in the United States. It is obvious that there are probably many districts throughout the United States that are currently offering internships, both with and without stipends. An initial task is to identify them.

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Trainer's Forum is the official newsletter of the Trainers of School Psychologists and is published four times (September, December, March, and May) a year. The Forum publishes peer reviewed articles related to advancing training and supervision of school psychologists within the field and higher education. It also publishes comments on previously published articles. The Forum serves as the official archival document for TSP, containing treasury reports, conference summaries, executive board summaries, and other official summaries/documents. Statements contained in the Forum are the personal views of the authors and do not constitute TSP policy unless so indicated. The Editor of the Forum reserves the right to edit all copy and to refuse ads. Advertising and announcements appearing in the Forum do not necessarily indicate official sanction, promotion, or endorsement on the part of the Forum or TSP. Articles, comments, classifieds, display ads, and announcements should be submitted to the Editor. Articles, advertising, and announcements may also appear on the TSP web site:

<http://trainersofschoolpsychologists.org/>

Funded or Unfunded?

Internships are "work" experiences

Most doctoral and certificate level school psychology students do not receive full funding during their three to five years of full-time residency. Needless to say, graduate education is expensive and students are accruing significant debt. Even at low interest rates, students may accumulate upwards of \$100,000 in loans by the time they graduate.

Obviously a paid internship would help defray the costs of training. However, paying off one's debt is not a good enough argument to support paid internships. Instead, interns need to be paid because the intern is not only a student, she/he is also a health service provider and should be treated as such by the site at which they are "working." Make no mistake the intern is working. The intern is acting in a professional manner, and should be respected by teachers and staff (who are themselves, remunerated) and by parents and children to whom they are dedicated. The interns should be respected for the work they do, not for being altruistic or excellent students. Treating the intern as a member of the professional "team" requires that they be remunerated in kind.

During the culminating educational experience – the internship – most students will work 35-42.5 hours a week for the school district (considered to be "full-time status") and not be paid. One might ask, "Is this a fair labor standard?" For example, it is reasonable to assume that the services provided by fifth-year doctoral interns (with prior school-based practica and externships) are similar to those being provided by first and second year school psychologists who are being remunerated. This two-tier system provides unequal remuneration for equal work and may be discriminatory.

Is training compromised?

Crespi's argument that paid internships could compromise the nature of training or the locus of responsibility for training only has validity if the training program has abandoned the student to the machinations of the proverbial "big bad wolf." However, the problems that Crespi is referring to (e.g., dual role relationships, quality of training or reduced standards) have been successfully addressed in other settings. Remuneration does not have to lead to a compromise of standards, nor does training have to be short shrifted. Training programs need not surrender their authority and direction while the student is on internship.

Clinical psychology, our professional relative, provides a training model in which internships are monitored for quality control. As a result, training programs are assured that the student is being treated fairly and that the standards of the profession are being maintained. No outcry is heard from clinical, counseling or, for that matter, from school psychology programs when their students are placed in an APA approved clinical internship. No outcry is heard even though the training program no longer has full control of internship experience. To reiterate, "APPIC discourages unfunded internships."

Why the outcry about paid school-based internships? Perhaps the reason is due to a lack of quality control and not to the monetary component. Perhaps our challenge is to develop standards that school districts can adhere to that would also satisfy training programs and oversight organizations. Perhaps school districts need to be educated about the value of remunerating students – interns – for their work. Perhaps school districts will be able to

attract more highly qualified interns if they paid them a fair wage. The arguments, that funds cannot be allocated or that a two-tier remuneration system would affect morale or that guild issues prevent such an endeavor all have some merit, but they should not be impermeable roadblocks to change.

Supervision

Some argue that because interns need to be supervised, the internship is made more expensive. While this argument is valid, it is not relevant because first and second year school psychologists also need to be supervised. Most State Departments of Education or Psychology Boards require that applicants for licensure be supervised in their post-doctoral employment prior to doctoral licensure. Both NASP and Division 16 support the supervision of practicing school psychologists. In essence, first and second year school psychologists are considered employees, are supervised and are paid at the rate of other school professionals. Interns are not.

Professionalism

School Psychology interns deserve to be treated as professionals. APA recognizes the connection between compensation and professional status and as such, approximately 98% of APA-approved clinical slots are funded. Clinical, Counseling and School Psychology interns who complete their internships in clinical settings are compensated for their work, while those working in schools are often not compensated (See 2004 School Psychology Internship Directory). This disparity may lead to a "professionalism gap," in which the school psychology interns sees themselves as undervalued and lacking in professional status as compared to their clinical and counseling peers. This fact will create a divide that affects recruitment and the future of our profession.

"Internship Training..." continued on page 4

President's Message

Jim Deni, Appalachian State University

I think in my career this is the first time I have been sitting at my computer writing while having a wheel barrel parked beside my lab door. I am finally letting go of things I have never used in the last 20 years and hauling it off to the dumpster in preparation for my move to a temporary office within the next forty-eight hours because of renovations to the psychology building. And as would be the case on most university campuses these days they tell you to move out without any support so the department got creative and contracted with a local correctional facility that will begin helping us move on Monday. I was thinking this morning, we get free labor, they get time off their reduced sentences their serving, and free therapy. In between this mess I am grading final exams and posting grades and I know my colleagues around the country are experiencing the same kind of craziness this time of year.

Since this will be my final presidential message I want to thank all of you who are TSP members. We have increased our membership and TSP has been represented at every major meeting as a voice for all university training programs. We continue to set record attendance numbers at our annual meetings during the NASP convention and this year was no exception. We had a packed room and positive feedback about this year's program. I think the

piece of the program that had us all in disbelief was the individual reporting on the ETS Praxis examination. Because of the concerns of many university trainers and reports from our students taking the exam we invited an ETS representative for the second year in a row to address our concerns. In particular, TSP is concerned that: (1) The content of the examination is no longer clearly aligned with the content required by the *NASP Standards for Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology*; (2) There is no evidence of the examination's reliability; (3) There is no defensible data to describe average performance on the examination; and (4) Existing descriptions of the mean examination scores suggest that minorities pass at a very low rate compared to majority examinees. In addition, ETS does not provide information about their students' performance to training problems, and consequently NASP approved programs must collect unofficial copies of examination scores in order to report our students' performance in program reports to NASP and/or NCATE. As professionals with expertise in testing, most TSP members have addressed the issues of high stakes testing in their states and many have recommended that alternative methods be used in addition to state and national tests to assess content knowledge. Yet, in our own profes-

sion, the Praxis is used by many states as a requirement for certification/licensure to practice, a requirement to become a nationally certified school psychologist (NCSP) and a requirement for training programs to report when submitting materials for NASP accreditation. At the request of the TSP Executive Board Beth Doll and I have written a letter to the NASP president, president-elect, and the ETS president expressing the above concerns. In the letter we recommend that NASP suspend use of the Praxis Examination in School Psychology both for the NCSP and NASP approval of School Psychology training programs. We will keep you updated on this issue.

I'll end by simply saying it was a pleasure to be TSP President and I would like to personally thank the executive board for the support and encouragement. I can assure you that TSP is strong and becoming a loud voice for university school psychology training programs across the United States. I would encourage all of you to be involved in TSP because it is a wonderful experience. And if you can't be personally involved continue to support TSP with your membership. Have a wonderful summer and (I'm sure) some needed rest and relaxation.

Recruitment and Future Practice

Applicants to school psychology programs often ask about the internship year and quickly learn of the disparity between traditional clinical, counseling and school psychology placements. While they may enroll in School Psychology Programs, many high quality students who could be attracted to school psychology internship positions, had they been funded, opt to take a funded position elsewhere – in clinical and counseling centers.

The field of school psychology is losing high quality students of color, non-traditional students, heads of households, working parents and others who cannot afford a non-funded, culminating internship experience. The field is losing quality professionals who could staff our schools in the next decades.

While most of this discussion has centered on doctoral internships, I believe the same

arguments can be supported in relation to certificate level school psychology internships. I hope no one doubts that Certificate-level School Psychology interns deserve equality of status and professional respect to doctoral interns from other health service provider training programs.

Feminization of the Field

Finally and certainly most controversial is the "pink elephant in the room." The ratio of women to men has steadily increased in our field. The school psychology internship mirrors the field of psychology in general.

Two related issues need to be addressed in our society and in school psychology: 1) are women being paid less for equal work and consequently, is it easier for the system to continue to support unfunded internships; and, 2) how do we attract more men to the field?

Funding internships may be responsive to both related issues.

I understand that change does not occur without a dialectical process. So let's continue it.

References

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Trainers of School Psychologists Outstanding Contributions to Training Annual Award

The Trainers of School Psychologists accepts nominations for the Outstanding Contributions to Training Award. This award is presented to school psychologists who throughout their careers have demonstrated exceptional contributions to training issues that merit special recognition. The award recipient will be presented with the award at the TSP annual meeting held during the NASP convention. The winner will be asked to serve on a committee to select subsequent award winners. Anyone, including a candidate him or herself, may nominate a school psychologist trainer for the award. Five sets of materials should be submitted for each nominee including a letter outlining their training contributions, their vita, and 3-5 supporting letters. Please send nominations by January 15, to the current TSP past president. A committee will be selected February 1. The award winner will be notified in April or before the NASP meeting. For the 2005 Award, please send the nomination materials to Jim Deni at denijr@appstate.edu.

The TSP Executive Board welcomes its newest members:

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(Montclair State University)

and

Natalie Politikos

(University of Hartford)

