

IN THE LOOP

ISPP NEWSLETTER



Winter 2025



TAKE A MOMENT TO LEARN MORE ABOUT WINTER 2025 HIGHLIGHTS AND WHAT'S TO COME!

The Doctor of Psychology (PsyD) in Clinical Psychology program at the Illinois School of Professional Psychology (ISPP) is designed to educate and train students to become effective health service psychologists. ISPP aspires to develop psychologists who have the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for successful clinical practice.

Since its founding in 1976, ISPP has continuously strived to provide excellent doctoral training in an APA-accredited, academically rigorous, and nurturing environment. We are proud of our 49 year legacy.

*18 S Michigan
Ave, Chicago*

In this newsletter you can expect:

Welcome
Message

ISPP Assembly

ISPP Community
Gatherings

MPA Conference

Current Student
and Alumni
Spotlight

Resources

Welcome Message from the Program Director



Leah Horvath, PhD
Program Director, Associate Professor

Greetings, ISPP Community and Friends!

As I type this note, it is a beautiful spring day in Chicago. We are on the break between winter and summer term so campus is quiet and I have a few moments to pause and reflect. This year has felt like a roller coaster ride – and sometimes (or most of the time), I am searching for the ride operator asking them to stop this ride and let me off! But I am grateful for my training as a psychologist – I use my tools to help me manage the ups and downs and the uncertainty; to look for ways to work towards positive change; and - as always – to turn towards hope. So once again, I have the pleasure of spreading some hope and joy via our ISPP Newsletter. This issue includes the student and faculty presentations from the Midwest Psychological Association (MPA), the on-campus events we hosted during the winter semester, and of course our student and alumni spotlight.

This issue, we spotlight third year doctoral student Vinuta Hemadri! An excellent student and psychologist-in-training, Vinuta is also known for her engagement in extra-curricular research (see her at MPA), and her friendly presence in the department as one of our wonderful student workers.

Our alumni spotlight is Dr. Nieves Esquivel. Dr. Esquivel was, at one time, a student worker in the department as well! Now she is a bilingual, postdoctoral mental health provider serving clients in Northwest Indiana, with aspirations of starting her own practice.

I hope reading the ISPP Newsletter brings some joy. I offer a huge thank you to doctoral student Ana Perez for creating this newsletter and to all of you who take the time to read it and connect with your ISPP community.

Sending my best to our ISPP community,

Leah

ISPP Student Assembly

It is the mission of this organization to provide both personal and professional support and development opportunities to the students of ISPP at NLU. We aim to promote a strong community environment that facilitates student well-being, engagement, relationship building, and personal growth, with a focus on respect and dignity for all.



ISPP Assembly held an interview workshop to prepare 1st year students for their first round of practicum applications. **Congratulations** to those commencing their diagnostic practicum!

ISPP merchandise
available now!

<https://www.redbubble.com/shop/ap/166889390?asc=u>

Thank you to PsyD student Tina Giordano for creating the logo and shop!

Interested in becoming a **peer mentor** for the incoming cohort?

<https://forms.gle/dYUm9hcjgL93CVKQ7>

Be on the lookout for the Summer Edition as we send off the interns and graduates at the End of the Year Celebration!

Student Concerns Survey

ISPP Community Gatherings

Winter 2025 proved to be a term of gathering as a community.

On **February 18**, we welcomed Dr. Colin Ennis, alum and Past-President of IPA, who spoke about the power of professional memberships and how they can shape your career trajectory.

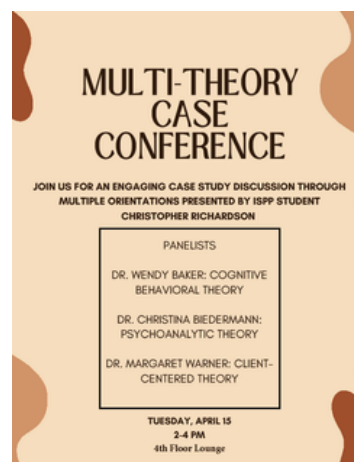
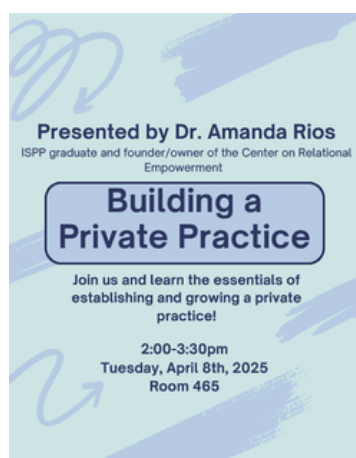
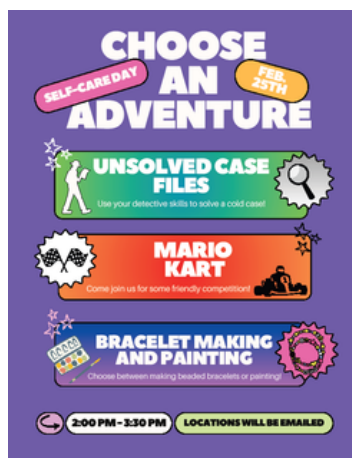
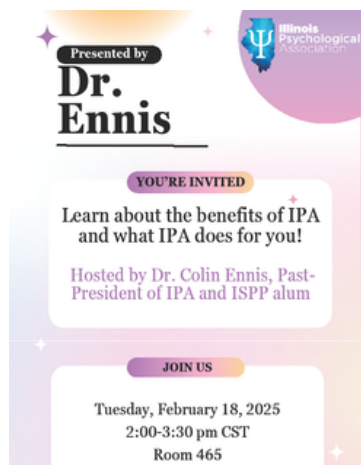
A week later, on **February 25**, students took time to recharge during a self-care day, enjoying puzzles, games, and creative activities designed to promote relaxation and connection.

On **March 4**, core faculty, Dr. Emese Vitalis, offered valuable guidance on navigating the world of research and conference presentations—empowering students to take their academic work to the next level.

Then, on **April 8**, Dr. Amanda Rios, ISPP alum and owner of CORE, returned to campus to share her journey in building a private practice, offering insights and encouragement to future clinicians.

We closed out the term on **April 15** with a dynamic and interactive case formulation session led by advanced student Christopher Richardson. His case was thoughtfully interpreted through the lenses of three different theoretical orientations by Dr. Wendy Baker, Dr. Christina Biedermann, and Dr. Margaret Warner—a lively demonstration of integrative thinking in action.

Thank you to everyone who presented, and to those who attended!

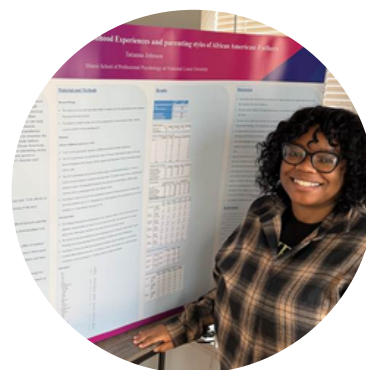


Midwestern Psychological Association Conference

Congratulations to all of our ISPP students and faculty who presented at the MPA conference earlier this month! Seven students presented posters, eight students co-led a discussion, and seven faculty members presented their research and facilitated discussion at the conference. Thank you for representing ISPP!



Lynnette Wright – presented her dissertation: Cultural Pride's Impact on Mental Health Barriers for Black Women



Tatianna Johnson – Presented her dissertation: Adverse Childhood Experiences effect on Parenting Styles



Shraya Pandey, Vinuta Hemadri, Shaima Aljawfi, Kahkasha Khan, and Asmaa Mahran - presented their research: Employee Burnout: Exploring Differences in Healthcare vs. Non-Healthcare Departments During COVID-19



Eva Valdez, Aaleiyah Spaulding, Katie Alvarez, Gabriela Crucianu, Asia Hall, Amy LaBlonde, Kylie Schmidt, and Sarah Shin, supported and encouraged by co-presenter **Dr. Ericka Mingo** – Gave a talk on: Reimagining Psychology: Anchoring Change Through Personal Artifacts

Midwestern Psychological Association Conference



Drs. Emese Vitalis, Christina Biedermann, Anissa Rivers, and Misty Mann
- Led a conversation on: Menopause: Exploring Ideas at the Intersection
of Individual and Community

Many of our colleagues from the NLU Community Psychology doctoral program shared their expertise as well.

- Combating female genital mutilation and promoting alternative rites of passage: A proposed study of African migrant communities in Chicago Jumai Kaosarat Olumo-Saidu, NLU; **Brad Olson**, National Louis University
- Applying for Academic Jobs: Building your Competence Fabricio Balcazar, University of Illinois, Chicago; Christopher B. Keys, DePaul University; Leonard Jason, DePaul University; Yolanda Suarez-Balcazar, University of Illinois Chicago; **Brad Olson**, National Louis University
- Art as Witness, Art as Bridge: Fostering Dialogue on Palestine Through Creative Practice Hana Masud, City Colleges of Chicago; **Brad Olson**, National Louis University; **Tiffany R. Jimenez**, National Louis University; Adam Gottlieb, Community Partner
- Challenging Violence Across Settings: The Roles of Race and Discrimination Shizuka Yanagii, DePaul University; Susan McMahon, DePaul University; Kailyn Bare, DePaul University; Taylor Swenski, DePaul University; Jared Hunt, DePaul University; Megan Greeson, DePaul University; Nancy J Bothne, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology; Rosa Garcia, DePaul University; Maria Palafox, National Louis University; Caleb Kamplain, National Louis university; **Tiffany R. Jimenez**, National Louis University
- Intent or Impact? Examining Racism and Institutionalization on Black Communities Ashley Dennard, National Louis University; **Ericka Mingo**, National Louis University; Caleb Kamplain, National Louis University; DaJonese Turner, National Louis University
- Perceptions of Racial Profiling and Socioeconomic Disparities Influencing Community Support for Equitable Public Safety Reforms Titilayo Ogunbambi, National Louis University; Laretta Omale, National Louis University; Kanyshai Saiakbaeva, National Louis University; Symone Latham-Dior, National Louis University; **Judah J. Viola**, National Louis University; **Ericka Mingo**, National Louis University
- University-community Partnerships to Support Youth Development and Social Change **Ray Legler**, National Louis University; Nathaniel Viets-VanLear, My Block My Hood My City

ISPP Current Student Spotlight: **Vinuta Hemadri**



Vinuta Hemadri, MA, MSc (She/Her)
3rd Year Clinical Psychology
Doctoral Student

Vinuta has completed diverse clinical training across India and the US with a focus in neuropsychology. She also recently presented at MPA; check out her work on Page 5!

How did you get interested in psychology?

I was born and raised in Belgaum, a quiet city in Karnataka, India. Where I grew up, most people leaned toward careers in medicine, engineering, or something in tech. That's what I saw around me, so after 10th grade, I followed what felt like the usual path—I chose biology, chemistry, physics, math, and computer science. At the time, I thought maybe I'd end up in data science.

But it didn't take long to realize that something didn't feel right. A few months into 11th grade, I noticed that while I could manage the workload, I didn't enjoy it. The competition was intense, and slowly I started feeling anxious and overwhelmed. I was doing what I was "supposed" to do, but I wasn't happy. I didn't feel connected to the subjects or to the idea of that future.

That's when I saw a psychologist—mostly just to figure out what other career options I could consider. It wasn't anything dramatic, just one of those moments where you know something needs to shift. What surprised me was how impactful that one week of sessions turned out to be. It wasn't even the career assessment that stuck with me—it was the experience of being in that room, talking to someone who really listened without rushing to give answers.

As a confused teenager, I think what I needed most was someone to simply see me, ask the right questions, and help me reflect. That space gave me clarity. It made me curious—not just about psychology as a subject, but about what it means to really support someone.

I remember thinking to myself, "I want to do what she does." And that thought never really left.

That was back in 2015. Ten years later, I've stayed on this path—learning, growing, and slowly becoming the kind of therapist I once needed. Psychology has become more than a subject for me—it's a way of being, a way of offering something meaningful to others. And I think that's what drew me in: the possibility of helping someone feel understood, just like I did back then.

ISPP Current Student Spotlight: Vinuta Hemadri

If you'd like to share, please tell us about one of your most important experiences at ISPP.

Social justice, feminism, and cultural equity are values that hold deep meaning for me not just in my clinical work, but in how I move through the world. That awareness has only strengthened my commitment to advocacy.

I come from a community deeply shaped by patriarchy, and even as a child, I found myself noticing and questioning things that felt unfair. That early curiosity has stayed with me, but now it's supported by the knowledge and clinical experience I've built over time.

In India, I was involved in community mental health work, and since moving to the U.S., I've continued that thread. Currently, I work at a substance rehabilitation center with clients who are mostly unhoused and navigating complex systems with very little support. Much of my advocacy happens in the day-to-day moments connecting clients with case managers, speaking up when I notice gaps in care, and creating space in therapy to help clients identify what agency looks like for them.

Because the work is often short-term, I try to use our time together meaningfully—whether it's helping clients think through how to communicate their needs, practicing conversations they might need to have with service providers, or walking with them as they take small but powerful steps toward reclaiming their autonomy.

To me, advocacy and therapy are not separate. Supporting someone in finding their voice, even in the smallest ways, is part of the work. It's not about giving answers, but about being with someone as they begin to see what's possible for themselves.

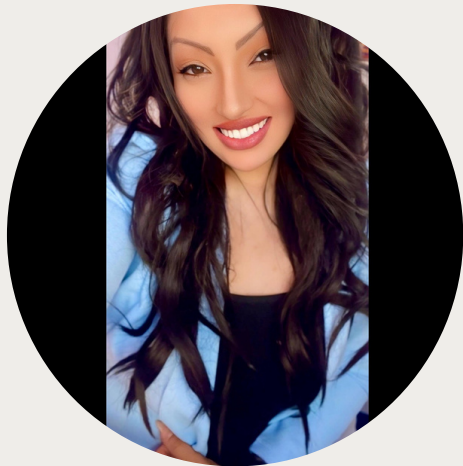
What has been the most rewarding part of your training thus far? What are your professional goals?

The most rewarding part of my training has been realizing how powerful kindness, compassion, and simple human presence can be, especially in moments of uncertainty and overwhelm. I moved to the U.S. just four days before this program began, and since then, these past three years have been full of growth I couldn't have predicted. Much of that growth has been supported by the people around me—professors and supervisors who generously shared their guidance, and friends who have become my chosen family here in Chicago. On the hardest days, just having someone show up with warmth has made all the difference.

I've also discovered parts of myself I didn't know were there. I've learned that I'm adaptable, open to new challenges, and capable of more than I once believed. From presenting at APA to diving into research projects like the one I worked on with Microsoft—where I started off not even knowing the terminology—I've found meaning in stepping outside my comfort zone and letting curiosity lead. I've come to see that I'm someone who seeks out opportunities—or creates them when they don't exist. And through all of it, the support I've received—from peers, mentors, and my community—has helped me believe in myself a little more each day.

In all this, I'm learning what it means to be part of something bigger than myself. As Virginia Woolf once said, "I am rooted, but I flow." That's how this chapter of my training feels: a deepening connection to both my own voice and the collective "we" that holds me.

ISPP Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Nieves Esquivel, Psy.D.



Dr. Nieves Esquivel, Psy.D. (She/Her)
Bilingual Pre-Licensed Clinical Psychologist

How did you get interested in psychology?

My interest in psychology came about unexpectedly. After high school, my hometown saw a rise in suicide rates—many of the individuals were kids who grew up with my younger brother.

That initially led me to study criminal justice, but I soon realized becoming a police officer wasn't the right fit. I took a few career tests online, and counseling kept coming up. Psychology felt like a natural direction—and I haven't looked back since!

Tell us about your training experience.

I've had the privilege of training across a range of settings. I started with diagnostic work in Catholic schools on Chicago's South Side, then provided therapy to adult women at The Circle Resource Center in Brighton Park. I completed my advanced practicum at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center and later returned to The Circle to lead therapy groups. For my internship, I worked with diverse populations at Regional Mental Health Systems located in East Chicago, Indiana, where I also worked in the residential and outpatient substance use units. I completed my Post-Doc Fellowship at Smart Love Family Services in their Chicago and Oak Park locations, seeing children, teens, and adults.

ISPP Alumni Spotlight: Dr. Nieves Esquivel, Psy.D.

What has been the most rewarding part of your career thus far?

Hands down, it's watching my clients grow and transform in real-time. Being part of that journey is incredibly fulfilling and I wouldn't trade it for anything!

Where do you see yourself in 5 years?

I plan to have my own private practice up and running in both Illinois and Indiana—hopefully even sooner than five years. I want to serve children, teens, adults, couples, and families, while also offering psychological assessments such as IQ testing, immigration, and bariatric evaluations. I'd also love to branch into motivational speaking, consulting, supervision, and teaching!

Do you have any advice for prospective students?

Yes, absolutely! While in grad school, please find a way to have a healthy work/life balance. In the long run, your mind and body will either thank or punish you for it!

Dr. Esquivel is currently a clinician at Nina Hartman, LLC, based in Indiana. While at ISPP, she was a TA/co-leader for Dr. Warner's PPD class!

Get Involved! Membership & Workgroup

APAGS Committee for the Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Diversity



American Association of Graduate Students (APAGS)

APAGS is a division within the American Psychological Association (APA) dedicated to representing and addressing the needs of graduate students in psychology. APAGS provides resources, support, and advocacy for psychology graduate students to help them succeed in their academic and professional pursuits.

Get Involved:

<https://www.apa.org/apags/governance>

Resources:

<https://www.apa.org/apags/resources>

Resource Guide for Psychology Graduate Students of Color:

<https://www.apa.org/apags/resources/ethnic-minority-guide>



Antiracism & Intersectionality and Workgroup

All are encouraged and welcome to join us as we host an open conversation on race, racism, and the intersectionality of gender and gender identity. We meet every Wednesday at 7pm CST.

LINK

<https://nl.zoom.us/j/92136874153>

The Thrive Center



National Louis University believes ALL students can THRIVE through the advocacy of an inclusive campus and the support of a caring community, where students feel a sense of belonging and empowerment to not only be academically successful, but thrive personally and professionally.

<https://nl.edu/student-services/food-pantry-and-thrive-resources/campus-and-community-resources/>

Single Stop

As we begin the academic year, the Thrive Center is encouraging for staff and faculty to promote this excellent service. **Single Stop** is a one-stop application that provides all resources available to individual needs from housing, healthcare, education, financing, and much more!

Volunteer Opportunities

With our partnership with the Chicago Food Depository and other incredible events, the Thrive Center invites everyone to sign up for volunteer opportunities across the year. **Pick a Date on Our Calendar**

Additional Support and Resources



Counseling & Wellness Center (122-Rm. 3013)

In crisis? Text "START" to 741-741 or call 988

NLU's Counseling & Wellness center offers in-person and virtual session with a counseling intern or licensed clinician! This is FREE for students!

They have also partnered with UWill for FREE immediate access to teletherapy, a 24/7 crisis support line, telemedicine support, and various wellness programs—all easily accessible through Uwill's user-friendly online platform. Students receive up to 10 sessions.

Activate your account today!
www.UWill.com



The Food & Hygiene Pantry (18-Rm. 526)

NLU's food and hygiene pantry provides resources to help students overcome the basic-needs barriers that impeded their academic success, physical health, and social emotional life.

[HTTPS://NL.EDU/STUDENT-SERVICES/FOOD-PANTRY-AND-THRIVE-RESOURCES/CAMPUS-AND-COMMUNITY-RESOURCES/](https://nl.edu/student-services/food-pantry-and-thrive-resources/campus-and-community-resources/)



Learning Support

NLU's Learning Support provide personalized tutoring (both virtually and onsite) in writing, math, computer science, and English-language learning (ELL/ESL support); coordinate with faculty to support student learning; host workshops and events to prepare students for major assessments; create and curate help guides and tutorials; and advocate for equitable educational access.

<https://nl.edu/learning-support/>

Additional Support and Resources



Help Hotlines

- Help and Crisis Lifeline: 988 (Call or Text)
The Trevor Project: Text 678-678 or call 866-488-7348
National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-7233
National Child Abuse Hotline: 800-422-4453
Elder Abuse Hotline: 800-252-8966
National Association of Anorexia Nervosa & Associated Disorders: 847-831-3438
National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE
National Runaway Safeline: 800-786-2929
Crime Victims Hotline (Stalking): 866-689-HELP
Alcohol Abuse and Crisis Intervention: 800-234-0246
National Safe Haven Alliance Crisis Hotline: 888-510-BABY
Veterans Crisis Line: 800-273-8255

Looking for a therapist?

- <https://www.nami.org/>
- <https://locator.apa.org/>
- <https://openpathcollective.org/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us>



Thank you for reading!

ISPP @ NLU	WINTER 2025
Questions? aperez81@my.nl.edu	18 S Michigan Ave.