



Graduate College Research Certification

Congratulations to our incoming
2018-2019 cohort

SHAIMAA ABDELHALEM



Ph.D. student,
Department of
Geoscience

Advisor:
Dr. Wanda J. Taylor



My research is focused on studying the earthquake potentiality in the city of Las Vegas and its effect on the 2 million lives that live in it and the much more people who visit it each year. Because the impact of my research project is very high and directly related to human lives, I need to conduct a world-class research that will be competent enough help mitigate the dangers of any potential earthquake disasters.

CHRISTA CLAYTON

M.S. student, Couple
& Family Therapy
Program

Advisor:
Dr. Carissa D'Aniello-
Heyda



Recent Projects:

- How to collaborate with community mental health agencies to sample their clients and conduct process research: what elements of the process of therapy (EX. therapist behavior; client expectations) are associated with client retention and progress?
- Systematic synthesis and critique of common factors literature in marriage & family therapy research (What non-model specific elements of therapy are associated with change? EX. client characteristics, therapeutic alliance, hope/expectancy)

Goals:

- Identify opportunities for external funding & grant-writing
- Gain more experience with IRB protocol

DAKOTA ELLIOTT

M.S. student, Couple
and Family Therapy
Program

Advisor:
Dr. Carissa D'Aniello-
Heyda



My research focuses on the things that make therapy successful for both clients and therapists. One of the projects that I will be working on with my advisor, Carissa D'Aniello-Heyda is how the general public views advertisements for couples therapy. We will examine the way Marriage and Family Therapists publicize their services and what makes clients decide which therapist to see. We are also currently working on a project that looks at the issues that surround the Marriage and Family Therapy field on a global scale. I want to be in this program because I believe the workshops and presentation requirements will refine my skills of grant writing, public speaking, research design and will teach me how to get published. As I develop these skills, I feel that I will be better prepared to be an informed research consumer, which in turn will make me a more effective clinician.

KENNETH FATKIN



**M.S. student, Couple
and Family Therapy
Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Katherine
Hertlein**



My purpose in this program is to improve my research abilities and to continue to learn and grow as a student and researcher. While in this program I intend on researching such topics as: how technology affects relationships and ways we can improve relationships through the use of technology.

SARUNA GHIMIRE

Ph.D. student,
Department of
Environmental and
Occupational Health

Advisor:
Dr. Francisco S. Sy



I am a third-year doctoral student in Public Health, with a concentration in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Under the supervision of Dr. Francisco S. Sy and Dr. Rachelle Rodriguez, I aim, through my doctoral research, to examine the relationships and pathways between nutritional adequacy, telomere length (a biomarker of aging), and chronic diseases. My long-term research goal is to provide new insights and directions for aging research to promote healthy aging and longevity worldwide. By participating in GCRC, I am hoping to develop my research skills and learn best practices.

CASSANDRA HILL



**M.S., Couple and
Family Therapy
Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Katherine
Hertlein**



My research interests are marital satisfaction in military couples, intimacy levels of military couples in relation to deployment, attachment styles in romantic relationships from childhood, trauma, grief, and the onset of disordered eating. I aspire to help families, couples, and individuals cope through transitions and hardships in life. I hope to gain fundamental research skills that can be applied in clinical practice to aid in therapeutic treatment.

ANITA HORVATH



**M.S. student, Couple
and Family Therapy
Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Katherine
Hertlein**



Anita is a second-year Master's student in the Couple and Family Therapy Program. She is involved in research capstone supervised by Dr. Hertlein and is currently working on several projects related to divorce, mobile phone use behaviors, experiences of women and academia, and others. She hopes that the skills and knowledge in conducting successful research she is gaining will help her grow as a professional therapist and academic researcher.

CHING-HSU KIM



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Teaching & Learning**

**Advisor:
Dr. Shaoan Zhang**



As a doctoral student and scholar, gaining research skills and knowledge will increase my accountability and enable me to pursue a profession in academia. Throughout the years in the doctoral program at UNLV, I have learned how to construct a research paper from the classes I have taken. However, there are some issues or topics the doctoral classes wouldn't cover such as getting an approval of IRB, presenting a poster academically, or organizing dissertation chapters. Thus, I am sincerely eager to apply for the certification and attend workshops to gain skills and knowledge that I was not able to gain from the classes

EUN JOO (EJ) KIM

Ph.D. student,
Hospitality
Administration

Advisor:
Dr. Sarah Tanford



Eun Joo Kim is a second year PhD student in hospitality administration in the Hotel College. Her area of interest is building branding strategies based on consumer behaviors for businesses in the hospitality industry. She has ten years of work experience in the food and beverage industry as a marketer and the experience directly tie into her research interests. Through the acquisition of active research focusing on the relationship between hospitality brands and consumer behaviors, she hopes to explore the branding strategies for different settings and levels of hospitality industry market segments. She believes ceaseless curiosity and continuous research can provide an opportunity to uncover a “master key” to open the door for a hospitality brand. Throughout the course of the program, she hopes to learn skills to develop research ideas and produce impactful findings that can contribute both academia and industry.

NICK LEPP



M.A. student,
Department of
Communication
Studies

Advisor:
Dr. Bruner



My research focuses on queer theory within critical rhetoric and how it can push the limits of academic and pedagogical thought. My goal with this certificate is to better conduct complex academic research and better understand how to synthesize it into academic writing.

EMILY LILES

M.S. student, Couple
and Family Therapy
Program

Advisor:
Dr. Carissa D'Aniello



I am currently a first year graduate student in the Couple and Family Therapy (CFT) master's program. I believe the graduate college research certification will help me better achieve both my short term goal of becoming a future licensed mental health provider, as well as my long term goal of promoting into a clinical supervisory role. I hope that through this research training I will increase my self reliance, scope of practice, and overall diagnostic ability.

As part of my graduate capstone I chose to recently join a research team that studies common factors of therapy. We are currently reviewing approximately 33 articles in order to compile a 20 year review of common factors literature in CFT. Common factors are best understood as specific elements that facilitate change and are consistently active in therapy, regardless of the specific model that a therapist may utilize. Knowledge of common factors is important because it helps clinicians better understand how to increase treatment effectiveness.

ROBERT MARCH



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Radiochemistry**

**Advisor:
Dr. Ken Czerwinski**



I am a second year Ph.D. student in the Radiochemistry program. My ultimate focus is on the synthesis and analysis of radiopharmaceuticals used in neural imaging to further research on neurological disorders. I have worked on a project separating thorium from uranium and plutonium, ultimately to find a production method for the radionuclide Actinium-225. Most of my work will be on synthesizing radiopharmaceuticals and analyzing their biological properties as well as studying the ligand/nuclide interactions of various radionuclides with medicinal properties. I hope to gain valuable skills in literature research and how to devise a plan for a research project with the ultimate goal of presenting my research in scholarly settings.

RACHEL MOOERS

M.S. student, Couple
& Family Therapy
Program

Advisor:
Dr. Kat Hertlein



I aim to gain a deeper understanding of the way technology affects human relationships. I hope to explore how the viewing of collaborative porn (meaning that both people in the couple are viewing porn as opposed to just one person viewing porn) impacts couple relationships. This research explores how couples navigate issues of intimacy, relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, and relationship investment and commitment in the digital age. Using a mixed-methods approach, this research examines collaborative pornography use in heterosexual long term relationships. I seek to further understand how the beliefs, experiences, and method by which couples negotiate collaborative pornography use influences their intimate relationships.

JOHN OLAWEPO



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Environmental and
Occupational Health**

**Advisor:
Dr. Jennifer Pharr**



John Olawepo is a doctoral student in Public Health (with a focus on Global Health) at the School of Community Health Sciences, University of Nevada Las Vegas (UNLV). His research interest borders around how to use implementation science methods to solve maternal and child health challenges.

He is participating in the Graduate College Research Certification to gain additional skills that will help address a key challenge facing science today – the challenge of communicating evidence-based research to the general population. He expects to use the knowledge and skills gained from this certification to develop and communicate the roll out of feasible, culturally appropriate, and transformational health solutions that will help address the management of chronic diseases on the global stage.

John Olawepo received his Master of Science degree in Public Health from the University of London, United Kingdom.

TIFFANY PEREIRA

M.S. student, School
of Life Sciences

Advisor:
Dr. Scott Abella



Understanding the methods and techniques behind effective and well-reasoned research is not only important but imperative. Report and grant writing, study design and format, and presentation and poster creation are just some of the skills needed to be successful.

I appreciate the opportunity to hone these skills as part of the Research Certification Program. My research will focus on evaluating long-term change in soil seed banks, fertile islands, and plant communities of conservation-priority rare plant habitat of the eastern Mojave Desert (Lake Mead NRA).

I am thrilled, not only to work in an area I care for deeply, but to engage in research with direct implications concerning restoration and conservation activities occurring now, but also with regard to the future. I look forward to the challenges and prospects that await.

**LAWRENCE
SAGADRACA**



**MPH student, School
of Community Health
Sciences**

**Advisor:
Dr. Francisco S. Sy**



I am a 2nd year Master's student in Public Health, with a concentration in Epidemiology and Biostatistics. Last summer, I conducted a cross-sectional survey to evaluate the risk factors for chronic conditions in the Filipino-American community. The study assessed specific health needs, behaviors and conditions. I aim to prevent health risks for different minority groups. I believe that my research skills have potential to be greater in participating in GCRC.

HUI-TING SHIH



Ph.D. student,
Department of
Physical Therapy

Advisor:
Dr. Szu-Ping Lee



My research focuses on the training to people with lower limb loss, as well as the sensory and brain changes after the loss. I hope to learn research related skills ranging from scientific writing to grant application from the offered workshops. Besides, I also hope to gain more presentation experience after involving in GCRC program.

AMANDA M. SMITH



**M.S. student,
Couples & Family
Therapy Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Katherine
Hertlein**



I am involved in research that explores technology and how it affects couples, relationships, and sexuality. This includes topics such as how individuals recover from infidelity as well as the use of smart phones to surveil their partner's behavior.

I am excited to be a part of the Graduate College Research Certificate program to learn the skills necessary to become an effective and ethical researcher. I would like to conduct research that contributes to the greater body of knowledge as well as evaluate and apply the most recent research to my clinical therapy practice.

JULIA SMITH

**M.S. student,
Couples and Family
Therapy Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Katherine
Hertlein**



Julia Smith is a third year Masters student in the Couple and Family Therapy Program. Julia is currently on a research team led by Dr. Katherine Hertlein studying Chronic Lyme Disease and the effects on attachment in the family system. She is also researching and co-authoring a book chapter on Divorce in Nevada. Julia chose to pursue a research certificate to broaden her research and writing skills, as well as further increase her therapeutic understanding of chronic illness, specifically Lyme Disease in the family system. In her student internship she focuses on individual and family counseling, chronic illness and working with families through divorce.

AMBER STEPHENS



**M.A. student,
Department of
Communication
Studies**

**Advisor:
Dr. Tara Emma-
Sommer**



Amber Stephens is a first generation college student, with a background in psychology and sociology. She has presented her research at several national and regional conferences. Her research interests revolve around issues of identity. She is interested in how identity is developed and expressed both interpersonally, i.e., within romantic relationships, and in broader public/social spaces. Additionally, she is interested in how marginalized identities choose to express themselves, communicate with others, and actualize their goals. She is beginning work on her thesis and is excited to increase her skills and knowledge in order to become a more effective researcher.

ZVETOMIRA SVETLEFF

Ph.D. student,
Department of
Educational
Psychology & Higher
Education

Advisor:
Dr. Steven G.
McCafferty



Zvetomira Svetleff is a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Psychology & Higher Education advised by Dr. Steven G. McCafferty. Her research interests include the study of what design features in intelligent tutoring systems increase students' engagement while learning. Particularly, her research examines how student affect interacts with engagement and learning during language tutoring sessions.

ANALI TORRES



**Ph.D. student,
Department of
Counseling, School
Psychology, &
Human Resources**

**Advisor:
Dr. Samuel Song**



Amongst all that UNLV has to offer, it is the richness embedded in my institution's community and resources that continues to enable the unequivocal drive for my academic career. The GCRC will contribute to the development of skills necessary to initiate, conduct, and conclude successful research projects as well as provide insight of best research practices. There are so many factors that contribute to my determination but everything that represents the foundation of a child's social, emotional, and behavioral development is what motivates me. Gaining an all-encompassing set of skills and knowledge necessary to become an effective researcher will allow me to contribute to the body of knowledge in my field. My hope is to be a valuable addition to the field of school psychology. My goal is to contribute to the community that helped shape the person I am today and make a difference in future generations.

**ANNA
TRUJILLO-
DEFRONZO**



**M.S. student,
Marriage & Family
Therapy Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Carissa D'aniello**



My research is multi-faceted; I serve as a research assistant to a Marriage and Family Therapist faculty member at UNLV. I hope to learn the basics of research processes and procedures so that I can effectively conduct my own research in the future.



Ashley VanYperen



**M.S. student,
Couples and Family
Therapy Program**

**Advisor:
Dr. Katherine
Hertlein**



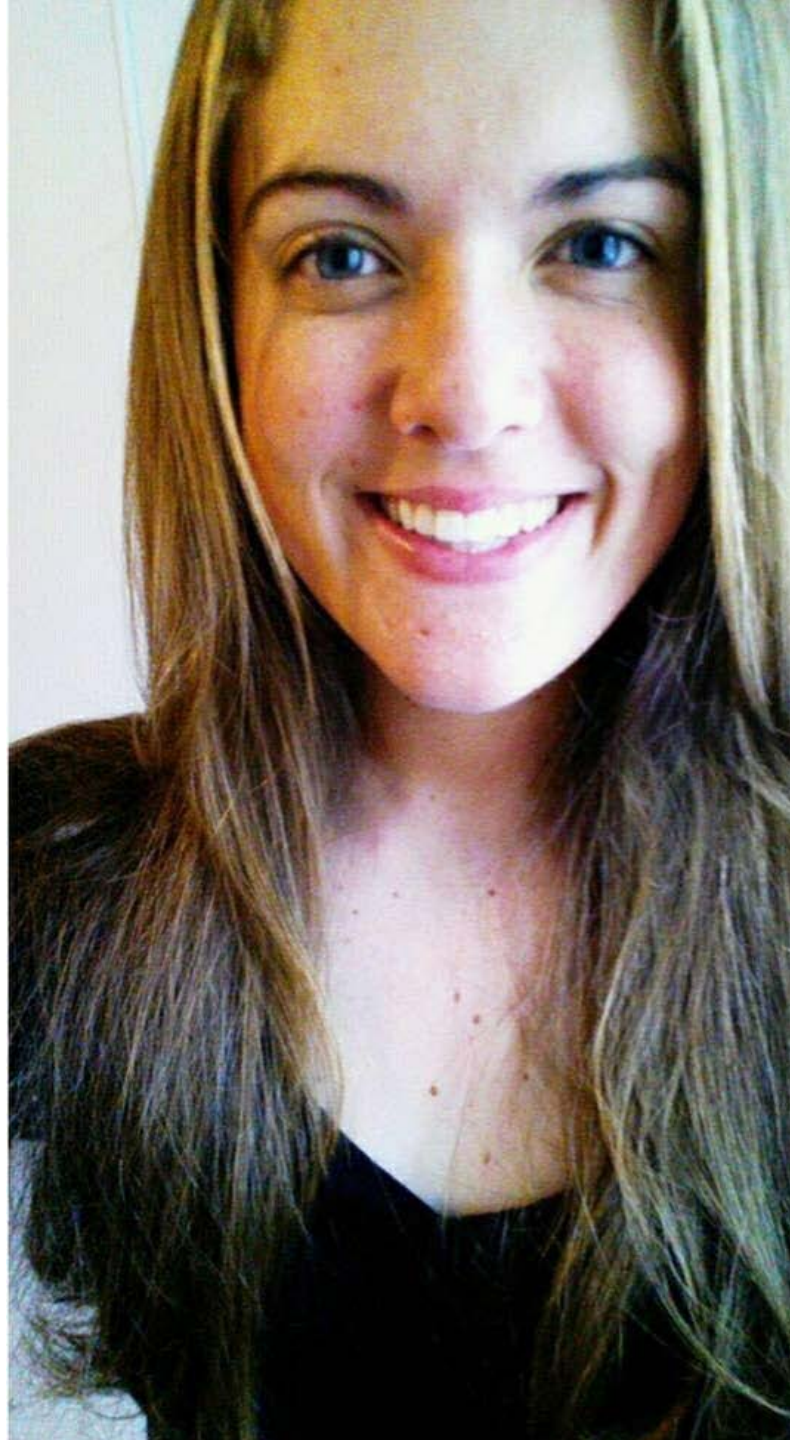
The research I am currently working on looks at the impact of technology on relationships, specifically with how it can affect infidelity. I want to be able to better learn how to work with qualitative data and learn how I can take things that were told to me, and make them measurable and quantifiable. I am so used to working with numbers instead of words!

KIMBERLY WHITBECK



**M.S. student,
Department of
Kinesiology &
Nutrition Sciences**

**Advisor:
Dr. Brian Schilling**



Through this program, I aim to expand my research abilities and present the strongest research possible for my culminating project on the topic of torso-borne loads and their effects on performance of military fitness and occupational tests. My goal is to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective researcher and develop meaningful results in the field of tactical strength and conditioning. Upon graduation, I intend to work with the Department of Defense or an organization such as the Wounded Warrior Project, to increase research in the field of tactical strength and conditioning and improve exercise performance in both current servicemen and veterans.

BETH WI

Master's in Business
and Hospitality

Advisors:
Dr. Michael Mejza
Dr. Mehmet Erdem



Following my passion for making an impact in the hospitality industry, the focus of my research is examining the influence of patron and employee relationships on acceptance of robotics in the workforce and how the level of interactions between customers and service providers can help achieve higher level of customer satisfaction. The journey of researching has taken my work to the next level at every step. My experiences in the process have not only solidified my interest in research but also have taught me how essential it is to have necessary research skills; providing effective and accountable research is my role to improve overall quality of the hospitality industry. The research certification program along with my other courses such as methodology and data modeling will foster me to become a stronger researcher.