



STETSON UNIVERSITY

2023 - Spring 2024 COHL Annual Report

Prepared by

The Center for
Optimal Health
across the Lifespan

<https://www.stetson.edu/other/cohl/>



ABOUT COHL

The Center for Optimal Health Across the Lifespan, also known as COHL, is an interdisciplinary, collaborative space in the new Cici and Hyatt Brown Hall for Health and Innovation. COHL was born out of Hyatt and Cici Brown's goal of enhanced health education, and investment into the local community's health care providing an opportunity to create community outreach experiences. The goal of the center is to provide easy-access programs for physical and mental health disorders prevalent in our community, to enhance the health and well-being of the community, as well as to train future Florida health service providers.

Projects

- The mission of the SMART Lab is to teach and research the efficacy of stress management and resiliency skills with individuals from Volusia County and students from Stetson University. The SMART lab targets significant reductions in stress levels using biofeedback monitors and can be combined with self-report measures of psychological disorders and indicators of resilience.
- Brain Fitness Academy is a cognitive rehabilitation program for older adults living with dementia. Participants attend three-hour group sessions twice per week, working with Stetson students on cognitive rehabilitation activities, physical exercise and socialization.
- Care Partner Support Group is lead simultaneously with Brain Fitness Academy, allowing graduate students from our counseling program to lead caregiver support groups.

FACULTY



COHL DIRECTOR- JESSE FOX

Associate Professor of Counselor Education

Jesse Fox, PhD, earned his doctorate from the University of Central Florida and spent several years on the faculty at Loyola University Maryland in the Department of Pastoral Counseling before joining Stetson in 2017. He has experience working with a range of clinical populations including college counseling, outpatient addiction treatment, community mental health and private practice. He is a project leader for the Spiritual and Religious Competency Project, a \$5.1 million grant funded by the John Templeton Foundation. Since 2020, Dr. Fox has served the Executive Director of the Episcopal Counseling Center, a non-profit counseling center serving the DeLand Community since 1987.



BFA DIRECTOR- SARAH GARCIA

Associate Professor of Psychology

Sarah Garcia, PhD, is a clinical neuropsychologist who studies non-pharmacological interventions for cognitive decline in a variety of medical populations. Her past work has examined cognitive deficits in a wide variety of populations (e.g. heart failure, bariatric surgery candidates, and dementia) as well as the use of exercise, sleep and electrical stimulation as potential preventative and treatment approaches.

FACULTY



BFA DIRECTOR- MATT SCHRAGER

Matthew Schragger teaches courses in human anatomy/physiology, the physiology of aging, exercise physiology, biomechanics and research methods. His research focuses primarily on aging, bioenergetics, and functional capacity. He has a secondary research focus on the physiology and biomechanics of mobility and human performance. In his aging research, Dr. Schragger analyzes large-scale databases through the National Institute on Aging, and he has published with Stetson students research on blueberries as a potential countermeasure to the functional effects of aging.



CARE PARTNER SUPPORT DIRECTOR- LEILA ROACH

Leila Roach, PhD, is licensed as a Marriage & Family Therapist and a Mental Health Counselor. She is an approved qualified supervisor for both LMFT and LMHC and holds the credential of Nationally Certified Counselor. Leila believes in the strength of relationships for promoting resiliency and wellbeing in individuals, couples, families, and organizations. She currently serves as associate professor and chair of the Department of Counselor Education at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida where she teaches couple and family counseling courses and supervises Practicum and Internship students. She has been practicing as a counselor for 30 years working with children, adolescents, adults, couples, and families in community agencies, public schools, university counseling clinics, churches, and private practice.

STAFF



COHL COORDINATOR- ARIEL CHIVERS

Ariel Chivers, a health-and-wellness expert who has been working with the senior population for 12 years, is the coordinator for the BFA and the Center for Optimal Health Across the Lifespan (COHL). She leads the Brain Fitness Academy sessions with the assistance of three or four undergraduate students who have strong backgrounds in psychology and health sciences-based courses. Chivers is the former associate executive director of the Volusia Flagler Family YMCA.

COUNSELOR ED ALUMNI



CARE PARTNER SUPPORT LEAD-NICOLE KING

Nicole King is an alumni of Stetson University and graduated with both a bachelors in sociology and a master's in clinical mental health counseling. She is now a registered mental health counseling intern at a local counseling practice and enjoys seeing clients from diverse backgrounds. Her clinical niche is grief and loss, but she also works to advocate for the unhoused and for survivors of domestic violence by working with national organizations that support increased access to care and resources. Facilitating connection is a passion of Nicole's and her work in both developing and running the Care Partner Support Group has been deeply fulfilling.

SMART LAB PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Our SMART Lab is part of a consortium of SMART Labs with the Ohio State University.

We utilize a standardized curriculum and technology developed by the world renown Heart Math Institute™.

We have created a self-paced guide for helping people identify where stress comes from, and how that can better anticipate and respond to situations that create stress and overwhelm.

Participants in the smart lab receive these benefits free of charge, supported in part through grant funding, and can participate in research on a voluntary basis.

SMART LAB



SMART LAB PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS



DRS. PAUL & DARCY GRANELLO

SUICIDE PREVENTION TRAINING WITH INTERNATIONALLY RENOWNED SUICIDOLOGISTS

In February 2024, COHL co-sponsored a suicide assessment and prevention training for 140 students and mental health practitioners from the surrounding Volusia County community. Drs. Darcy (Triple Hatter) and Paul Granello (Double Hatter) from the The Ohio State University, and alumna of the Stetson University Department of Counselor Education, facilitated the training.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, suicide rates increased approximately 36% during the pandemic (between 2000–2022). Suicide is the second or third leading cause of death for all groups between the ages of 10 to 34. Suicide is always an important topic, it is even more pressing now for our communities to talk openly about the causes of suicide, its effects on our families and communities, and how it can be prevented.

The Granello's provided our Stetson community an entire day of training in assessment, prevention, and responses to suicidal episodes. This training will undoubtedly save lives. Here are some participant quotes from their training experience:

“Incredible. Engaging. Dynamic. Real - useful and HOPEFUL and practical.”

“Very informative session. I feel much more capable in working with suicidal patients. Highly recommend.”


“Amazing speakers. Content is essential and I learned to much that may save a life. So thankful for Dr. Darcy & Dr. Paul.”

“One of the best set of speakers I've had the privilege of listening to. Incredibly moving and kept the balance between humor and seriousness.”


“This training exceeded my expectations. I learned so much and very much enjoyed the speakers and their passion for suicide awareness and prevention.”




SMART LAB PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS




450+ stress management and resiliency sessions conducted across our multisite SMART Labs at Stetson University and The Ohio State University




Hosted a suicide prevention training for 140 Stetson Students, Faculty, and Volusia County community members




1 Stetson University Athletic Team trained in stress management for personal benefits and team development




Provide 10+ Brain Fitness Academy caregivers for dementia with stress coping strategies




50+ Mental Health Professionals and Counseling Students trained in SMART Lab strategies to be used with clients in the Volusia community



Trained the Stetson University Office of Spiritual and Religious Life + Student Counseling Center in SMART Lab Strategies



1 satellite SMART Lab started in the community at the Good Samaritan Clinic on Plymouth Avenue



Conducted 2 Awakened Awareness Groups for Stetson Students to reduce anxiety, depression, stress, and boost resilience and spirituality

SMART LAB PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Our SMART Lab offered an 8 week wellness workshop in Spring 2024: **Awakened Awareness**

Stetson University undergraduate students were invited to participate in **Awakened Awareness: Spiritual Mind Body Practices for Enhanced Well-Being.**

Each 8-week, 90-minute workshop included meditation practices, an introduction to Awakened Awareness concepts, and sharing of reflections. During these 8 weeks students learned techniques and tools to reduce stress, increase overall wellbeing, and find deeper meaning and purpose in life!

All participants were required to be at least 18 years of age and enrolled at Stetson University.

The group was facilitated by Dr. Fox, Dr. Roach, Reverend Campbell, Kristie Perez or Ben Staskowski

Awakened Awareness is a meditation-based series of workshops that was developed from research at Columbia University's Teachers College and the work of Dr. Lisa Miller, and has been conducted with hundreds of undergraduates.



AWAKENED AWARENESS FOR UNDERGRADUATES

BFA PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

Served biweekly cognitive rehabilitation program for 20+ participants and provide important intergenerational learning through internship and practicum experiences.

Spring 2023

- 9 participants
- 6 participants returned for Fall 2023 semester

Fall 2023

- 12 participants
- 4 participants returned for Spring 2024 semester

Spring 2024

- 12 participants

Currently recruiting for our first summer semester in summer 2024

2nd Year receiving the Hollis Impact Grant



**Brain Fitness
Academy**

STETSON UNIVERSITY

BFA PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Collaborations with Hollis center trainers including regular classes with Frankie Painter
- Tai chi with Dr. Ana Eire
- Dance classes with Susan Femino-Floyd
- Talks on research and aging by faculty including Dr. Matt Schrager and Dr. Wendy Anderson
- Trips to Gillespie Museum, Hand Art Museum, and duPont-Ball library
- The Alzheimer's Association Brain bus coming to Stetson's campus in September 2023
- Participation in Alzheimer's Association's annual Walk to End Alzheimer's in October 2023
- Chair Yoga with certified Yoga Instructor and Stetson Graduate student Mahtaab Manekia
- Provided with audio books and magazines from Kathy Acevedo from the Florida Division of Blind Services and Talking book library
- Wet and dry art activities with Diamond Johnson from the Ormond Memorial Art Museum & Gardens
- Individual and couple portraits from local photographer, Betsy Stange



BFA STUDENT INTERNS

Student Experiences

Undergraduate students participate in a number of internship activities, working one-on-one with participants, and being trained on and utilizing cognitive rehabilitation and physiology techniques.

This internship gives them real-world health experience, and exposes them to advanced healthcare training earlier in their academic career.

Spring 2023

- 6 Stetson student interns

Fall 2023

- 5 Stetson student interns

Spring 2024

- 5 Stetson Student interns

Many students credit internship experiences to helping them develop professional skills and contacts and identify a career path for themselves.

This combination helps ensure students are successful in their immediate years post-Stetson

Post graduation, BFA Student interns have pursued the following:

- Research assistant at Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at Indiana University
- Research assistant at University of Florida
- Psychometrist at a local clinic
- Medical school

BFA STUDENT INTERNS AND RESEARCH

Each semester 3 student interns help with research

3 senior projects Spring 2023 from health sciences look at cognition and quality of life correlates for their capstones.

3 times a year, interested BFA participants did a longitudinal study evaluating cognitive, physical, and quality of life outcomes.

1 student looked at grip strength asymmetry as a potential biomarker of cognitive performance for her capstone.



CARE PARTNER SUPPORT GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Each semester two Counselor Education Alumni and one current Internship student participated in the leadership and planning of the seven bi-weekly meetings.

In addition to providing much-needed support and opportunities to share with other care partners, topics covered in the groups included becoming a resilient caregiver; tips for managing stress and burnout; diffusing family conflict and tips for improving communication; nutrition and wellness; tips for creating a dementia friendly home; mindfulness activities; and sharing community resources.

Research was conducted on the impact of the Care Partner support groups on the stress and strain/burden experienced by family caregivers.

Spring 2023

- 2 Care Partners attended support groups

Fall 2023

- 7 Care Partners attended support groups

Spring 2024

- 8 Care Partners attended support groups



CARE PARTNER SUPPORT GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Fall 2023

Vonshelle Beneby presented tips for getting through the holidays to the group on behalf of the Alzheimer's Association. In addition, the group learned about biofeedback training for stress when visiting the SMART lab and participated in a tour of Brown Hall Garden with Dr. Wendy Anderson.

Spring 2024

Guest speakers included

- Kathy Acevedo from the Talking Library
- Garden Walk and cooking activity with Dr. Wendy Anderson
- SMART Lab Visit and Managing stress and building resiliency as caregivers with Dr. Jesse Fox
- Communication strategies for Care Receivers with Sarah McLeod, Stetson Counselor Ed Alumni
- Tips for advocacy and Navigating the Healthcare System with Lyndsey Taylor and Vonshelle Beneby from the Alzheimer's Association
- Coren Meeks, Elder Care Attorney and Double-Hatter provided a wealth of information and answered questions related to elder care, Medicaid planning, and other essential issues.



NEEDS OF THE CENTER

The work we undertake in the center is not possible without your support. Though we apply regularly for external funding, there are needs we often must seek additional support to carry out essential tasks.

When you give, the intention of your gift can be designated for any of the following purposes:

- The mission of the center to promote training and research in health related disciplines.
- Material and technology for our labs.
- Full and part-time administrative and coordination positions.
- Graduate assistantships.



SMART LAB





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