

Candidate Statements for SPAGS Elections

President (Choose 1):

Sharon Nelson, Eastern Michigan University

Hello! I am a sixth year doctoral student at Eastern Michigan University, where I work with several mentors, including Steven Huprich, PhD (who currently is on faculty at the University of Detroit Mercy). Broadly speaking, my research interests are in personality and personality disorders. More specifically, I'm interested in contrasting and integrating models of understanding pathological personality, different diagnostic systems, and thinking about developmental trajectories for individuals struggling with personality issues. Recently I have been working with other researchers to develop a measure to assess level of personality functioning, as part of the proposed DSM-5 personality model. I have been employed for the last four years as the Editorial Assistant for the Journal of Personality Assessment, and this year have been serving on the International Society for the Study of Personality Disorder's (ISSPD) Student Section Congress as a communications officer. In addition, I serve on several boards or organizations devoted to student issues. These include a Student Diversity board, a Student Wellness organization, and a Social Justice organization devoted to working on and promoting issues of social justice within a student population. In addition, I have assisted the McNair program and, for the last 3 years, organized a panel each semester to workshop strategies for improving your chances of being accepted in to a graduate training program for our undergraduate students. As our university's undergraduate population is more diverse, and includes a greater number of "non-traditional" students than most four-year universities, this has been especially important to me, as a way to give back to our department. As a "non-traditional student" myself, I have a strong commitment towards working on addressing areas of concern for underrepresented student groups, as well as improving opportunities for learning, networking, and promoting a sense of mentorship and guidance for all students. Most recently this has also included conducting research on mentoring practices of diverse student groups from award-winning mentors. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family of rambunctious boys, camping, holding all night lab pajama parties, and the [occasional] prank.

Trevor Williams, University at Buffalo, The State University of New York

I am honored to be a candidate for President-Elect of the SPAGS board. Presently, I am a fifth year clinical psychology doctoral student at the University at Buffalo, working with Dr. Leonard Simms. My research focuses on evaluating structural models of personality pathology, as well as connecting such models to social-cognitive processes. To this end, my dissertation will focus on locating borderline personality disorder criteria within pathological trait structural models, then validating this combined model through examining its relations to facial emotion recognition. These research interests, and my development as a professional, have been dramatically shaped by my experiences in SPA. As president-elect of SPAGS, I would hope to ensure other students have similarly excellent and impactful experiences in SPA.

I first attended the SPA annual meeting in 2012, when I presented a poster as an undergraduate at Michigan State University working with Dr. Christopher Hopwood. Even as an undergraduate, I felt that both students and professors engaged my research, which I came to realize was a small example of SPA's collegial and student-friendly atmosphere. Indeed, the

next year I attended a paper session that consisted entirely of students presenting. This session was well attended and inspired me to present a paper on the relation between trait models and interpersonal problems as a first year doctoral student, in 2014. Presenting talks at SPA over the past four years has challenged me and led me to develop new skills, as well as provided valuable feedback on my work. As president-elect of SPAGS, I plan to promote opportunities for students to present their work, including continuing the SPAGS tradition of organizing paper sessions centered on student presentations.

In the past few years, my research has increasingly focused on understanding general personality functioning and social cognitive processes, from the perspective of trait models. This shift in focus has required that I learn new statistical techniques and engage literatures (e.g., emotion recognition tasks) that are outside the expertise of my lab. As a part of this, I applied for an F31 training grant from the National Institute of Health. In addition, I completed a project that validated a bifactor model of personality disorder criteria, which resulted in a paper that was chosen for this year's Mary Cerney Award. In both of these endeavors, I have found the SPA community incredibly supportive, oftentimes through informal conversations after sessions or during social events. Ensuring that students can access and benefit from engaging with SPA members would be important to me as president-elect.

In addition to my research, I also have been active in several leadership roles. Presently, I serve on the psychology graduate student association board in my department, which promotes student events and provides travel awards, among other activities. In addition, I served on a committee to revise the assessment battery for my department's in-house psychological services center. Finally, I have been member at large on the SPAGS board since 2015. In my time on the SPAGS board I have not only meaningfully contributed to running of student events, but have also learned a lot about how SPA operates as an organization. I believe that my experience on the SPAGS board and other leadership roles has prepared me for taking on the responsibilities associated with being president-elect of SPAGS.

Outside of academia, I enjoy hiking, concerts, travelling, cooking, and a well-made gin and tonic. I appreciate your consideration of me for the position of president-elect of SPAGS.

Member at Large (Choose 3):

Chloe Bliton, The Pennsylvania State University

Hello! My name is Chloe Bliton, and I am privileged to be running for a Member at Large position in the Society of Personality Assessment Graduate Student Association. For the past year, I have served as a Member at Large and a chair of the Education Committee, and I look forward to the possibility of participating in the SPAGS board again. I am a Clinical Psychology doctoral student at Pennsylvania State University and work with Dr. Aaron Pincus. Broadly speaking, my interests include exploring personality pathology and deficits in interpersonal functioning. As I develop and fine-tune my program of research, I hope to examine pathological narcissism in particular by using temporally diverse assessment tools (e.g., ecological momentary assessment) that examine personality through the lens of interpersonal theory. I am currently working on a project in which I am constructing a measure of interpersonal influence and its relation to personality pathology.

The use of assessment measures effortlessly bridges the gap between research and clinical practice. In my clinical work, I integrate personality assessment measures into my work to clarify and conceptualize clients' functional difficulties and create specialized treatment plans. I also look forward to using clinical work as an opportunity to identify areas of research that could improve treatment for clients struggling with personality pathology.

Continuing to serve as a Member at Large in SPAGS aligns with my aims to dive into the personality assessment community and enrich my training experience as a graduate student. I currently serve as the student representative for the Gender Equality Committee and have served as the Clinical Training Committee Representative for my cohort. These positions have given me the opportunity to facilitate communication between faculty and students. I hope that a position on the SPAGS Board will give me the opportunity to foster the exchange of research ideas among researchers and clinicians. By being granted the opportunity to bolster my knowledge and experience in assessment by serving as a Member at Large, I will strive to uphold SPAGS's mission of facilitating communication of ideas and advances in the field.

In my free time, however limited, I enjoy competing in elite powerlifting.

Sindes Dawood, The Pennsylvania State University

I am excited for the opportunity to be a candidate for a Member-at-Large position on the SPAGS board. Currently, I am a fifth year graduate student at The Pennsylvania State University's clinical psychology doctoral program working with Dr. Aaron Pincus. I have attended SPA's annual conference for the last four years, and have had the great pleasure this past year to serve as Member-at-Large and a chair on the Education Committee. I have used my time on the Education Committee to help organize more clinically focused panels for the upcoming 2018 SPA convention, based on students' feedback on past SPAGs panels. I would be thrilled and honored to serve in this position again, as I have a strong commitment to helping promote and foster the professional development of students. Creating opportunities for students to interact with not only other graduate students but also prominent researchers in our field is one of importance.

I am also the Graduate Student Representative for the Society for Interpersonal Theory and Research (SITAR), which has also been a wonderful experience as it has allowed me to collaborate with other members and the executive committee board to foster students' professional development, as well as promote and maintain a sense of community for students within SITAR. I have also served as the editorial assistant for the Journal *Assessment* during some of my graduate training.

In terms of research, I am particularly interested in using personality/interpersonal theory and measurement to better understand the phenomenological experience of personality disorders so that clinical research can better inform clinical practice. To this end, my research uses cross-sectional and longitudinal assessments to examine how personality pathology (e.g. pathological narcissism, borderline pathology) influences the experience of internalizing symptoms (e.g., depression, shame) and externalizing behaviors (e.g., self-harm, aggression) concurrently and over time. I have also been involved in lab projects using ecological momentary assessment to examine how individual variability in personality pathology can impact functioning and behavior throughout the day.

My clinical and research efforts have also been aimed at demonstrating to clinicians and researchers the utility of using a multisurface interpersonal assessment approach to conceptualize and assess the personality and interpersonal dynamics of clients in a therapeutic context (e.g., cognitive-behavioral or psychodynamic therapy). This can be used in the consultation room with individual therapy clients to help them better understand their dynamics, which provides a context to better understand their symptoms and helps inform treatment decisions in therapy. I have been fortunate to be able to present such work at past SPA conventions.

Thank you again for your consideration of my nomination for a Member-at-Large position. In my time outside of graduate work, I enjoy cooking or trying out new restaurants/recipes, watching TV series and movies (especially psychological thrillers), and playing board games.

Evan Good, Michigan State University

I am a third year doctoral student in clinical psychology at Michigan State University (MSU). My research interests are broadly focused on using interpersonal functioning to understand, assess, and intervene with personality pathology. My current program of research is interested in the development and validity of cross-sectional (e.g., circumplex assessment) and dynamic (e.g., momentary coding) interpersonal assessment in the context of psychotherapy. The goal of this research is to improve understanding of how moment-to-moment transactions between client and therapist inform diagnostic formulation and treatment trajectory, among other clinically relevant outcomes. Ultimately, I intend for this research to aid in developing an assessment framework for investigating mechanisms of change in interpersonal/ relational psychodynamic psychotherapy, particularly with patients with personality pathology.

I have attended SPA for the past 5 years and been involved in the conference as a presenter (3 oral presentations; 7 posters) and as a volunteer. Beyond my interest in personality assessment, I have continued to be involved with SPA due to diverse and collegial community I

have experienced there. As a budding graduate student, this environment was momentous in helping me to build professional relationships and articulate my research interests. As I continue to mature as a student, the SPA community continues to inspire my work; giving me a foundation for greater theoretical integration and the collaboration with colleagues outside of MSU. I am eager to be considered for a SPAGS member-at-large position as I have a desire to become even more involved in the SPA community and continue to foster professional relationships with its members. Additionally, I am very interested in being involved in continuing SPAGS role in facilitating the professional development of students interested in personality assessment.

Alana Harrison, University of North Texas

Hello! My name is Alana Harrison, and I am honored to apply for the position of Member-at-Large in the Society for Personality Assessment Graduate Student Association (SPAGS). I completed my master's degree at Michigan State University, and I am currently a first-year student in the Clinical Psychology program at University of North Texas. I have the great fortune of receiving research and clinical mentorship from Dr. Sharon Jenkins, a long-time member of SPA. My research interests broadly include the clinical utility of psychological assessments. I am specifically interested in the efficacy of collaborative therapeutic assessment; predictability of therapeutic outcomes, such as alliance and attrition; diagnostic reliability and validity of personality and projective assessments; and interaction of personality variables between therapists and clients. I look forward to potentially sharing my research with the members of SPA during this year's meeting in Washington, D.C. It would be an honor to represent fellow graduate students as one of SPA's Members-At-Large.

I first joined SPA as a student affiliate in 2014, and I presented my first graduate research poster at the SPA meeting in New York during the following year. It was an exciting (and somewhat nerve-wracking!) experience to interact with so many luminaries within the field of personality assessment. The following year, I returned to SPA to present another poster, but I also ventured out of my comfort zone by attending and volunteering at several workshops. One of the highlights of the conference was the SPAGS meet-and-greet at a nearby restaurant. I truly enjoyed networking with my fellow graduate students and learning about their current research. It was through these events that I began to feel invested in SPA. I am truly excited about returning to SPA in 2018, and I hope to contribute by becoming a Member-at-Large and representing my fellow graduate student members.

I feel that my involvement in other psychological student organizations will be an asset as a Member-at-Large. At Michigan State University, I served as a member of the Clinical Diversity Committee. At the University of North Texas, I currently serve as a member of Graduate Association of Students in Psychology, as well as Psychology Advocates for Social Change. I am also the Graduate Student Assistant to the Director of Clinical Training. These roles all entailed event planning, intra- and inter-departmental communication, and extensive organizational skills.

As a Member-at-Large of SPAGS, I hope to continue the organization's goal of fostering professional development for graduate students. I want to uphold the practice of communicating with members and soliciting feedback regarding topics of interest. I would accordingly work together with my fellow SPAGS board members to offer relevant panels and workshops for students at the annual SPA meetings. I also hope to increase research

collaboration between members by creating a database of ongoing student projects. Overall, as a Member-at-Large, I want to promote and maintain a sense of community for the student members of SPA.

In conclusion, by serving as a Member at Large, I will strive to uphold SPAGS's mission of facilitating the exchange of ideas, research, and other correspondence between graduate students within SPA. I am excited by the possibility of joining the ranks of those who contribute to the innovation, the exploration, and the enhancement of personality assessment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sharon Nelson, Eastern Michigan University

Hello! I am a sixth year doctoral student at Eastern Michigan University, where I work with several mentors, including Steven Huprich, PhD (who currently is on faculty at the University of Detroit Mercy). Broadly speaking, my research interests are in personality and personality disorders. More specifically, I'm interested in contrasting and integrating models of understanding pathological personality, different diagnostic systems, and thinking about developmental trajectories for individuals struggling with personality issues. Recently I have been working with other researchers to develop a measure to assess level of personality functioning, as part of the proposed DSM-5 personality model. I have been employed for the last four years as the Editorial Assistant for the Journal of Personality Assessment, and this year have been serving on the International Society for the Study of Personality Disorder's (ISSPD) Student Section Congress as a communications officer. In addition, I serve on several boards or organizations devoted to student issues. These include a Student Diversity board, a Student Wellness organization, and a Social Justice organization devoted to working on and promoting issues of social justice within a student population. In addition, I have assisted the McNair program and, for the last 3 years, organized a panel each semester to workshop strategies for improving your chances of being accepted in to a graduate training program for our undergraduate students. As our university's undergraduate population is more diverse, and includes a greater number of "non-traditional" students than most four-year universities, this has been especially important to me, as a way to give back to our department. As a "non-traditional student" myself, I have a strong commitment towards working on addressing areas of concern for underrepresented student groups, as well as improving opportunities for learning, networking, and promoting a sense of mentorship and guidance for all students. Most recently this has also included conducting research on mentoring practices of diverse student groups from award-winning mentors. In my free time I enjoy spending time with my family of rambunctious boys, camping, holding all night lab pajama parties, and the [occasional] prank.