

# Building a Psychology Training Community

*By Andy Hogg, Ph.D., ABPP; Lisa Merrin, Ph.D.; Dan Schulte, Ph.D.; Linda Caterino, Ph.D., ABPP; Joan Polansky, Ph.D.; and Bong Joo Hwang, Ph.D.*

There are many areas of the country with limited resources for psychology training. In those areas, the psychologists who are involved in training are often operating in relative isolation. APPIC brings together psychologists on the national level, but it is equally important to build local and state training communities. In Arizona, one important contribution to this goal is achieved by bringing members of the training community together for an annual conference. It is attended by trainees and supervisors from throughout the state who come to learn, collaborate, and celebrate psychology training.

The Arizona Psychology Training Conference has grown out of twelve-year collaboration between the Arizona Psychology Training Consortium and Arizona State University (ASU) Counseling Services. The Arizona Psychology Training Consortium is a subsidiary corporation of the Arizona Psychological Association (Hogg, 2003; Hogg & Olvey, 2007). The Consortium includes both APPIC-member internship and postdoctoral residency sites located throughout the state. The Consortium operates entirely through volunteers dedicating their time to train the next generation of psychologists. Since 2001, the Consortium has graduated over 400 interns and residents.

ASU Counseling Services provides an APA-accredited internship program and an APPIC-member postdoctoral residency program. There are also a few different types of practicum programs for advanced doctoral and master's level trainees. In providing training for future psychologists for over thirty years, ASU Counseling Services has been one of the most stable and well regarded training programs in the state. The registration website for the conference is hosted by ASU Counseling Services, and continuing education credits are provided by ASU.

The Conference began as a joint training effort for Consortium and Counseling Services interns and residents, both to provide didactic training and as an opportunity to interact with other trainees in the state. The response from the trainees was so positive that in subsequent years the other APA-accredited and APPIC-member training programs in the state were invited to have their interns and postdoctoral residents participate.

From there, the Conference continued to expand to include training for current and potential supervisors in Clinical, Counseling, and School psychology settings. The most recent expansion was inviting academic Directors of Training and doctoral students who are applying for internships. Each change and expansion has been met with considerable enthusiasm from participants, as well as increasing numbers of participants. From our initial conference, which was attended by around twenty trainees, each of the last two Conferences brought together over 130 participants.

The Arizona Psychology Training Conference has several goals, reflecting the different roles of the attendees. First, interns and residents receive training in foundational areas of practice and issues relevant to their training. Topics include ethics, diversity, self-care, EPPP examination strategies, interviewing skills, and legislative advocacy. Second, supervisors receive training in supervision theory and enhancing their supervision skills. One example is a popular workshop on handling problematic trainees, which was modelled after the APPIC Informal Problem Consultation workshops at APPIC conferences (Williams, 2014). Third, doctoral students get to meet internship Directors of Training and learn more about local training sites. The doctoral students get practical advice about choosing the training opportunities that will best meet their personal and professional needs.

Besides training that supports trainees and supervisors in their specific roles, plenary speakers have addressed a variety of current practice issues relevant for all participants. For example, the plenary speakers at the last conference spoke about the integration of psychology within primary medical care. The conference theme for 2014 will be the journey that psychologists experience throughout each stage of our professional careers.

The conference gives students, trainees, and supervisors the opportunity to meet psychologists working in different psychological specialties. For example, psychologists working in neuroscience get to interact with school psychologists working with children with cognitive impairments. Trainees and supervisors have many

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

CONTINUED FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

opportunities to network with each other in informal programs, providing the opportunity to discuss common concerns within the psychology community.

The format of the conference is similar to other professional conferences. Training programs, doctoral students, and former attendees are sent email invitations. The conference is structured to have two plenary sessions and six breakout sessions. There used to be separate tracks for interns, residents, and supervisors, but we found that allowing any attendee to pre-register for the breakout sessions of their choice was more enriching for everyone. One example of last year's offerings was a breakout session for supervisors and trainees to meet with members of the Arizona Board of Psychologist Examiners about the supervision and training requirements for licensure. There was another breakout session on the national and state prescriptive authority initiative (Munsey, 2008). In recent years, current and recent trainees were included in the conference planning process, which helped to infuse the conference with progressive and relevant content for the new generation of psychologists. An example of a session suggested by a trainee was ethical uses of social media. Another was a panel discussing several specialty areas within psychology. The size of the conference is ideal for interactive dialogue on supervision and training issues within our profession.

One of the most distinctive qualities of the conference is that it has a "how to" emphasis. It is about applying theory and science to actual practice. For example, diversity concepts and developmental theories are framed as best practices in supervision. Supervisors learn how to be in full compliance with evolving national and state regulations and standards. Training programs share documentation and procedures with each other. Interns and residents acquire concrete skills that help them advance to the next phase of their careers. Attendees leave the conference with something that they can immediately put to use. That is probably what keeps supervisors coming back to the conference year after year.

A key challenge in the success of the conference has been balancing the need for a high quality of programming with managing registration costs to participants. The conference needs to be accessible to supervisors, who are often underpaid. The registration fees are kept to a minimum so that it is affordable to doctoral students, academicians, and supervisors. Training programs pay the registration fees for interns and residents. Speakers are not given honoraria, but are generally given small gifts as tokens of the organizer's appreciation of their time. The conference relies heavily on the good will and dedication of members of the training community to contribute their time, efforts, and expertise.

One of the outcomes of the Arizona Psychology Training Conference is that it has encouraged and sup-

ported participants to create their own internship and residency training programs, and some of those programs have achieved APPIC-membership and APA accreditation. There is a vital need for the development of new internship and residency training sites (Keilin, 2014). Sharing training resources has helped "spin-off" programs get off the ground. The conference gets people excited about training.

Like many states, Arizona has a poorly funded public mental health system (SAMHSA, 2012). There are few medical and public health institutions that provide psychology training. That necessitates creativity, resourcefulness, and networking to provide collaborative training opportunities for students. The Arizona Psychology Training Conference is a model of collaboration in psychology training that can be replicated in other states. The authors would be glad to consult with other psychologists about establishing a training conference in their city or state.

Bringing people together who have shared needs and concerns creates community. Arizona is building a psychology training community.

#### REFERENCES

- Hogg, A. (2003). Arizona Psychological Association creates a consortium. *APPIC Newsletter*, 28, 2, 8.
- Hogg, A. & Olvey, C. (2007). State psychological association creates a postdoctoral residency and internship training program. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 38, 705-713.
- Keilin, G. (2014). 2014 APPIC match statistics combined results: Phase I and phase II. *APPIC e-Newsletter*, VII (1), 7.
- Munsey, C. (2008). *Prescriptive authority in the states. Monitor on Psychology*, 39, 2, 60.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2012). Mental health services provided across state government agencies. BiblioGov, Washington, D.C.
- Williams, J. (2014). Chair's column. *APPIC e-Newsletter*, VII (1) 4.

