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Improving Early Childhood Education

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UASP is happy to announce that students will be able to take advantage of the wildly successful Fast Track Advising again this semester. All you need to qualify for Fast Track is to have 45 completed UM credits.

Appointments have already begun, but it is not too late to schedule an appointment. To schedule, just approach your nearest green-shirt-sporting PAL and let them know you are interested. Then make sure you show up on time and come prepared with a DPR. That’s it!

These appointments run through October 15th so get one set up as soon as you can and jump on the Fast Track.

Subscribe to USAP UM
Check out these videos to help you prepare:
- Advising Guide
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By: Gaby Jimenez Garcia
When I invited Dr. Rebecca Shearer to interview for this piece, her response to the opportunity to talk about her research and time at UM was beyond enthusiastic. I have been aware of this particular passion since Dr. Shearer was my FORUM mentor during my second semester at UM. It is clear her work not only excites her but she is very eager to further general knowledge about, and interventions for, children with emotional and behavioral problems. Her work has been published in journals such as Developmental Psychology, the Journal of Educational Psychology, the Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology, the Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, and Early Childhood Research Quarterly.

The following is a summary of my interview with Dr. Shearer. Responses are not verbatim unless indicated as such by quotation marks.

**Jamie: What is your educational and professional background?**

Dr. Shearer: By training, I’m a mix of a school- and child- clinical psychologist, but also an early childhood educator. I am really interested in child development. I took the “longer, more nontraditional route to academia.” I earned my bachelor’s degree in psychology and obtained clinical volunteer and experience working with children in elementary schools. That really got me interested in working directly with kids and families. I got my master’s degree in developmental psychology from Teacher’s College at Columbia University, with a specialization in infancy and toddlerhood, and was trained as an early childhood educator. After that I worked for two years in the infant-toddler child development center at Columbia University as a teacher. Later, I worked as a developmental specialist at Babies and Children’s Hospital until 1999 in the high-risk follow-up clinic for any babies who spent any time in the neonatal intensive care unit after birth. This was the job that really exposed me to the many challenges children living in high-risk communities face in finding access to services that support their developmental needs. This led me to go to a school and child clinical and community psychology Ph.D. program at the University of Pennsylvania. A lot of the research that I did as a graduate student was conducted in partnership with the Head Start program of Pennsylvania. My dissertation involved developing a social-emotional assessment for preschool children, and looking at how social-emotional development related to children’s academic learning and social adjustment in the classroom as key domains of “school readiness.” This all laid the foundation for me to commit to using my research to inform interventions for children. Later I worked as a Research Scientist at the Erikson Institute Center in Chicago, a graduate school of child development and in the Research and Evaluation Office, Early Childhood Programs, Chicago Public Schools, but I wanted to come back to academia in order to pursue my own line of research and teach again so I came here in the fall of 2008 and started my own line of research up again at UM.

**Jamie: What are your research interests?**

Dr. Shearer: There are three central foci of my research:

1. Developing contextual assessments of children's social and emotional development, specifically children living in high-risk communities (especially low-income communities), and adapting these assessments so that they are developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate
   - I have worked to further validate a preschool measure of social-emotional adjustment called the Adjustment Scales for Preschool Intervention (ASPI). We also received a large federal grant from the Institute for Education Sciences (IES) to adapt it and translate it into Spanish. All of my research up to this point has been in partnership with the Miami-Dade Head Start Program.

2. Looking at development trajectories of social-emotional development for low-income children and children at risk, largely in Head Start Programs, and examining how that relates to kindergarten readiness and future school success, including mediator and moderator relationships (protective and risk factors) that might change or explain the relationship between behavior problems and children’s academic outcomes.

By: Jamie Nucho
3. Using the findings and applying them to intervention
   - We are in the third year of another IES funded grant called Learning to Objectively Observe Kids (the LOOK project). In the LOOK project, we take the ASPI assessment for observing children in context, which is related to my first research aim, to collect data from teachers observing and assessing children's behaviors in the classroom. We use the data to assist teachers with implementing new strategies to help children with challenging behaviors. You can see all of the “Owls” pictures outside of our offices because that is our logo!

Jamie: On your website, you mention your research is guided by a "whole child" developmental-ecological systems perspective. Can you tell me more about this perspective?

Dr. Shearer: This comes from Urie Bronfenbrenner’s bio-ecological framework where he talks about the idea that a child is not developing in a vacuum but rather in a nested system. The child is the center. Additionally you have more proximal systems that are very close to, and are direct influences on, the child, for example the child’s family and peers. The next sphere of influence is a little more distal and includes things that influence the parents and family, for example the parents’ workplace environment. Then as you move out, you have the larger macrosystem, which is the culture or broader socio-political system that influences the community, parents and ultimately influence the child.

There is a social justice aspect to my work since these low income children start out at a disadvantage right off the bat. Their larger macro-community doesn’t have the rich resources that those of children in upper-middle or middle class have. My research focuses on the more proximal systems within the family and school settings that help the child be successful. These influences are bi-directional with the child eliciting a response from the environment as well and I am very interested in understanding how to maximize the child’s capacities as well as the proximal system’s (family and school) strengths.

My research takes this model into account because I really want to understand the context in which behavior problems occur, as well as how the child is engaging in both positive and negative ways within the classroom environment and how this affects the five different domains of school readiness.

Jamie: Overall, how would you describe the current state of research on emotional and behavioral problems in children? How about for low-income children?

Dr. Shearer: “There are many smart scholars who are studying these questions, and the NIH and other grant-funding programs do provide support to examine these questions ... but it is a significantly underfunded area.”

I think that more and more people are starting to pay attention to early childhood social-emotional issues, especially in education. The focus has shifted from mostly clinical research to studying social and emotional behaviors in relation to how it emerges in the classroom setting. More recently there has been a political push to invest more in and expand early childhood education nationally, but it has to be high-quality intervention and high-quality programs need to be developed, empirically tested, and funded so each child can receive the benefits of increased funding.

I think one area of research that is significantly underfunded is looking at social and emotional development and behavior problems in Latino populations and the ways in which we can better support their development and early school adjustment.

Jamie: In your opinion, are children today becoming more susceptible to having behavioral problems in the classroom or elsewhere than they have been in the past?

Dr. Shearer: It would be interesting to think about the changes that have occurred historically to families and communities. I think that young children, especially those living in urban areas, are experiencing such risk to their early development now.

Teachers also are faced with a lot more than they have been in the past because the pace of curricula and the high academic accountability testing standards make it challenging, especially since the stakes are higher in schools than they used to be. In Head Start, one of the great things is that we focus on child-directed learning and play, whereas a lot of preschools focus right away on academic skills which adds more pressure for students and for teachers to support them. The latter can exacerbate the advent of behavior problems.
Jamie: What are your short-term and long-term goals for your research and its implementation?
Dr. Shearer: I really feel that my responsibility is to conduct high-quality, evidence-based research, to train students why that is important, and then be able to work closely in the community to ensure that the findings and subsequent interventions we develop are relevant to what the community needs. Ultimately we know that providing early intervention, even before preschool, has a huge impact on children’s social and emotional adjustment trajectories. So, we want to make sure we are providing feedback and input that will make systems-level change and will help more children to truly be ready for kindergarten and to be successful in school.

Jamie: Can you tell me more about the Head Start program and your involvement with it?
Dr. Shearer: Head Start is a federally-funded program that came into existence in 1965 as a six-week early intervention summer program. It stemmed from a public concern that there were many children growing up in poverty that were not on the same playing field, educationally-speaking, as middle class children. It was President Lyndon Baines Johnson who in his initiative called the “war on poverty” he had the idea that through education we could lift these families up “by their bootstraps.” Project Head Start was developed as a comprehensive program focused broadly on school readiness for preschool-aged children. This included health and nutrition components, in addition to academics, and a big emphasis on social competence. Head Start uses a two-generational approach, so there’s a focus on intervention for the child and also for the parents. Head Start provides parent training and workshops to enhance the parents’ ability to better support the child.

I consider myself a collaborator with the Head Start program, doing both basic and applied research, which entails collecting data that is directly generated from what the children need and so that it’s relevant to the program’s questions. We then use our findings to provide whatever resources we can, whether they be presentations, workshops, interventions, and other services. We don’t ever want to do “drive-by research,” where researchers receive a grant to observe a community and collect data, and then never give anything back to that community. We want to develop long-standing relationships and trust, with our community partners.

Jamie: What do undergraduate research assistants (RAs) typically do in your lab?
Dr. Shearer: The opportunities always depend on the nature of the project. We usually develop a fairly large team of students that are really interested in learning how to administer different assessments in the early childhood classroom. Generally, we’ll train RAs on a classroom or child-level assessment.

This year, we have a huge team that is testing the social and emotional intervention that I spoke of earlier, the LOOK project. Two mornings a week RAs drive out to the different centers and spend 2-3 hours observing the children and using the coding system (we have a training session for reliability prior to this). We are doing a small randomized field trial, which means we have randomly selected half of the classrooms to receive the intervention while the other will not, and then we will compare the data at the end of the year. Usually the undergraduates help us collect these data so we provide training for the students to learn how to use the contextual measure, the “CLASS” to observe the quality of teacher-child interactions and the “inCLASS: individualized classroom assessment scoring system,” to observe the quality of individual children’s positive and negative engagement and the teacher assessment measure which I have developed.

Jamie: Have you mentored any Senior Honors Thesis students? If so, what is that process like for you?
Dr. Shearer: I love mentoring Senior Honors Thesis students! Usually we have students who spend a year or so with us doing research for credit during which we train them on the different measures for them to get a good understanding of the focus of the lab. Often they’ll stay and do PRIME or JUMPSTART in the summer, and then they continue on to do their Senior Honors Thesis. Actually two of my current graduate students were undergrads here and did her honors theses with me. One (Tracy Carter) came in interested in peer play and now she’s doing her dissertation on it. The other (Johayra Bouza) is working on her Masters’ thesis on family involvement in Latino Head Start children’s language development.

Getting to know more about not only the research Dr. Shearer does and the reasoning behind it was inspiring and added on to the respect that I already had for her as an educator. The experience really solidified the importance of getting to know your faculty members. You never know who you’ll meet and what information you will find out!

If you’re interested in getting involved with Dr. Shearer’s research, contact her at rshearer@miami.edu.
Applications for Spring programs are due October 1st. Applications for Fall programs are due March 1st.
For general information on Study Abroad, visit the Education Abroad Office in Building 21, Room D.
Dr. Jennifer Britton is an Assistant Professor in the Child Division of the Department of Psychology. Dr. Britton completed her B.E. in Biomedical and Electrical Engineering, and received her Ph.D. in Neuroscience at the University of Michigan. She is the Director of the Neuroimaging facility on campus. In addition, she directs the Bridging Research on Anxiety, Innovations, and Neuroscience (BRAIN) Group where she examines attention biases and fear/safety learning in anxious children and adults. She does so using behavioral measures, psychophysiology, and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI). In her FORUM section, Dr. Britton aims to excite students about neuroscience research by exposing them to a variety of neuroscience applications, research techniques, and study designs, with a particular focus on neuroimaging. Her class (Section 1P) will meet on Tuesdays from 11:00-11:50 a.m. in Flipse 402.

Dr. Barry Hurwitz is a Professor in the Health Division of the Department of Psychology, with a secondary appointment in the Department of Medicine. He is the Director of the Behavioral Medicine and Clinical Physiology Laboratory in the Behavioral Medicine Research Center. Dr. Hurwitz completed his B.S. at the University of Toronto, with a major in Psychology and a minor in Zoology, and earned his Ph.D. at the University of Florida with a concentration in Biological Psychology. His primary research interest is in heart disease, which is the leading cause of human mortality. His research is focused on learning more about how biobehavioral factors (e.g., stress, emotional dysregulation, diet, and physical activity) drive cardiovascular disease early in the disease process so that more effective prevention of disease progression can be implemented in at-risk persons. In his FORUM section, a variety of topics will be discussed, including the neurobiological basis of consciousness, cognitive function, and brain disease and dysfunction. His class (Section 4J) will meet on Wednesdays from 5:00-5:50 p.m. in Flipse 402.

Dr. Lucina Uddin is an Assistant Professor of Psychology and directs the Brain Connectivity and Cognition Laboratory (http://www psy.miami.edu/bccl/). After receiving her Ph.D. in Cognitive Neuroscience from the Department of Psychology at UCLA in 2006, Dr. Uddin completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Child Study Center at NYU. For several years she worked as a faculty member in Psychiatry & Behavioral Science at the Stanford School of Medicine. She joined the Department of Psychology at the University of Miami in January of 2014. Within a cognitive neuroscience framework, Dr. Uddin’s research combines functional connectivity analyses of resting-state functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) data and structural connectivity analyses of diffusion tensor imaging data to examine the organization of large-scale brain networks supporting attention and social cognition. Her current projects focus on understanding dynamic network interactions underlying social information processing in neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism. Dr. Uddin’s FORUM will focus on topics related to the use of neuroimaging to study typical and atypical brain development. Her class (Section 4G) will meet on Wednesdays from 2:30-3:20 p.m. in the Neuroscience Building.
Dr. Jill Ehrenreich May is an Associate Professor in the Child Division of Psychology. She is a Miami native who received her undergraduate degree from the University of Florida and her Ph.D. from the University of Mississippi. She was a Research Assistant Professor of Psychology and the Associate Director of the Child Program in the Center for Anxiety and Disorders at Boston University until joining the faculty at UM in 2008. In FORUM, Dr. Ehrenreich May plans to discuss research in child clinical psychology, including the phenomenology and treatment of childhood disorders. Dr. Ehrenreich May’s research interests focus on the development and evaluation of evidence-based treatment approaches for anxiety and depressive disorders in youth. Her class (Section 4C) will meet on Wednesdays from 10:10-11:00 a.m. in Flipse 402.

Dr. Annette La Greca is a Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics and the Director of Clinical Training for the Department of Psychology (Child Division). She received her B.S. degree from Fordham University, her Ph.D. from Purdue University, and her clinical internship training at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. She received many national awards for her research, mentoring, and service to the field of clinical-child and pediatric psychology. Dr. La Greca’s research focuses on preventive interventions and “risk and protective factors” for child and adolescent mental and physical health. In FORUM, Dr. La Greca will discuss research issues in clinical child psychology, including how adolescent peer relations (e.g., cyber victimization, and romantic relationships) and natural disasters contribute to youths’ physical and mental health (e.g., anxiety and depression). She combines scientific readings with real-life applications to encourage students to think critically about the ideas presented. She will teach two sections of the course: Wednesdays from 1:25-2:15 p.m. (Section 4F) and Wednesdays from 2:30-3:20 p.m. (Section 4G), both in Flipse 402.

Dr. Kiara Timpano is an Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Adult Division. Dr. Timpano received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from Florida State University and completed her internship and postdoctoral fellowship at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, MA. Dr. Timpano directs the Program for Anxiety Stress & Obsessive Compulsive (OC) Disorder (PASO), which is committed to understanding the causes, consequences, and associated features of the anxiety and OC spectrum disorders in adults. Dr. Timpano is also interested in finding ways to apply vulnerability research to improving treatment and prevention efforts. In her FORUM section, Dr. Timpano will focus on issues in clinical psychology, with a special emphasis on issues related to the anxiety and OC spectrum conditions. Her class (Section 10) will meet on Tuesdays from 9:30-10:20 a.m. in Flipse 402.

Dr. Daniel Messinger is a Professor in the Child Division and coordinates the Developmental Psychology area. He received his bachelor’s degree from Haverford College, his master’s degree from the University of Chicago, and his doctoral degree from the University of Utah. At UM, he began at the medical campus, studying infants prenatally exposed to cocaine. Now in Flipse, Dr. Messinger is interested in the development of infant emotions, cognition, and communication. Currently he studies the development of autism using automated measurement approaches from computer visuals. Dr. Messinger hopes to engage his FORUM students in discussions about the meaning of emotions and autism, the effects of prenatal drug exposure, and the role of genes and experience on development. His class (Section 62) will meet on Tuesdays from 10:00-10:50 a.m. in Flipse 302.

Dr. Michael McCullough is a Professor in the Adult Division and he coordinates the Evolution and Human Behavior emphasis for the Behavioral Neuroscience Program. He completed his B.S. with a major in Psychology at the University of Florida and received his Ph.D. at Virginia Commonwealth University. He directs the Evolution and Human Behavior Laboratory and is currently examining the functional circuitry governing people’s impulses to punish and seek revenge, their desires to forgive and reconcile with individuals who have harmed them, and their abilities to resist impulses and urges. He is also interested in religion, particularly how religious ideas and behaviors influence behavior by modifying the operation of evolved psychological mechanisms. In his FORUM section, Dr. McCullough will try to excite students about evolutionary approaches to understanding behavior. Dr. McCullough is also a native Floridian. His class (Section 4D) will meet on Wednesdays from 11:15 a.m.-12:05 p.m. in Flipse 402.

Questions to think about:

- What are your research interests?
- What kind of career would you like in the future?
- What kind of psychology and/or neuroscience technology or techniques would you like to learn more about?
- Have the mentors worked in a place or attended a school you may be interested in (e.g., NIH, Purdue University, or UCLA)?
- What are some of your other academic interests (such as minors and cognates) and how do they relate to research?
Alumni News

Dr. Susan Geffen (Neuroscience B.S., '08) recently completed her psychology Ph.D. at the University of Southern California and is working on a post doctoral fellowship at the University of Calgary. Congratulations, Susan!

Dr. Marytery Fajardo, (Neuroscience B.S., '08) completed her M.D. at the Miller School of Medicine in 2012 and is now a Child Neurology Fellow at Lurie Children's Hospital in Chicago, affiliated with Northwestern Medical School. She has joined the local UM Alumni Organization in Chicago and, as a passionate 'Cane, she is happy to make herself available to chat with any current students interested in her field!

Leanne Burnham (B.A., '00) received her M.Ed. from the University of Maine in 2005 with a focus in Student Development in Higher Education. She is currently the Director of College Counseling at Kents Hill School (a small, independent boarding school) in Maine.

Christine Gonzalez (B.A., '08) completed her Master's degree in Social-Organizational Psychology in 2010 at Columbia University. She now works as a Human Resources Generalist for HBO Latin America here in Coral Gables, FL and has been there for the last 3 years.

Dr. Theresa Dulski (Neuroscience B.S., '05) is in her third year of pediatrics residency at the University of Washington in Seattle. After completing residency, she will serve the Alaska Native community as a general pediatrician at Southcentral Foundation in Anchorage, AK.

Dr. Dominic Maggio (Neuroscience B.S., '08) completed his M.B.A. at UM in 2012 while completing his M.D. at the Miller School of Medicine (received in 2013). Dominic is now a second-year neurosurgery resident at the University of Virginia. Good luck to this three-time UM alumnus!

Dr. Alex Henchy (B.A., '07) has since earned her Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Kentucky and is now the Director of Institutional Effectiveness and Assessment at Asbury Theological Seminary. While attending UM, Alex participated in PRIME and completed a Senior Honors Thesis. “My start in research during my undergraduate years definitely led me on my current path”!

Student Shout Outs

As a member of the University of Miami Debate Team, sophomore neuroscience major Anna Shah competed at the Intercollegiate Debate Tournament at Georgia State University and helped win the Novice Division Championship. Along with undeclared sophomore, Melissa Cavell, Anna won 4 out of 6 preliminary debates. They then won the next round on a 2-1 decision and advanced through all the elimination rounds with unanimous 3-0 decisions, earning them the championship title. Debates lasted about 2 hours a piece, leaving Anna and Melissa dueling with words for more than 20 hours over the weekend. Congratulations, Anna!

Want to be featured here?

Send news about your accomplishments, awards, research conferences, publications, acceptances, job offers, and other updates to Alida Lambert at alambert@miami.edu to see yourself in the LimeLight!
Hello Psychology and Neuroscience majors!

The Psi Chi E-board hopes that you all have had a great start to the fall semester! Psi Chi held its first general meeting on September 4th and there was a strong showing of many students from all grade levels. The first meeting was an informational meeting on Psi Chi’s history and membership requirements, as well as a celebration of Psi Chi’s 85th year as an honor society! The e-board introduced themselves and gave a short presentation about the history of Psi Chi, explained its goals, and announced future events. One general meeting attendee won a Kaplan GRE giveaway!

We held our Psi Chi Tie Dye event on September 30th to raise awareness and funding for research on Alzheimer’s disease. In the month leading up to the event, the Psi Chi E-board organized an online donation drive and sold T-shirts to tie dye at the event to benefit the Alzheimer’s Association. All together, Psi Chi raised over $1500! We had a great time tie dying at the event and we are excited to donate to an organization that funds cutting edge research and makes a difference in the lives of millions of people with Alzheimer’s disease, as well as their families and caregivers. Thank you to everyone who donated and participated in the Psi Chi Tie Dye!

We will also hold a Research Recruitment Fair on Monday, October 21st, at 6:30 p.m. in the Flipse building where research faculty, their grad students, and their research assistants will provide information about their labs, their current projects, and their RA positions. There will be both psychology and neuroscience research labs present.

We encourage all psychology and neuroscience majors to attend our events and become associate members! Have a great October!

If you have any questions, please contact us at umiamipsichi@gmail.com. Like our Facebook page “Psi Chi International Honor Society at the University of Miami” or visit our website (http://umiamipsichi.wix.com/umiamipsichi) to stay updated on Psi Chi-related news and events.

Hello Psychology and Neuroscience majors!

The Undergraduate Neuroscience Society (TUNS) e-board hopes everyone is having a great semester so far! We had our first meeting on Monday, September 15th, where the new e-board introduced themselves and Dr. Helen Bramlett, the new Director of the Undergraduate Neuroscience Program, who spoke about the use of mild hypothermia in the treatment of traumatic brain injuries.

TUNS has many exciting events planned this semester! We will be hosting a Brain Awareness Week, a Mental Health Week, and other interesting activities. TUNS will also be present at the National Gandhi Day of Service on October 5th, so we encourage everyone to come out and join us! Some events we have planned for our upcoming general meetings include a talk by Dr. Jennifer Britton followed by a tour of the new Neuroscience Annex. We will be hosting a Neuroscience Faculty mixer in early November as well as cohosting a Research Faculty Panel and Networking night with UConnect, a club dedicated to connecting students to research opportunities. Come to our next general meeting for more information about future events and how to get involved!

As a friendly reminder, TUNS is open to students of all majors and it’s never too late to join! If you are interested in neuroscience and looking for ways to get involved on campus, feel free to email us at umtuns@gmail.com, join our OrgSync page, or subscribe to our Facebook group at UMiami TUNS.

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News for Neuroscience
By: Andrew Mudreac & Liz Alvarez
Public Relations Chairs

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As a friendly reminder, TUNS is open to students of all majors and it’s never too late to join! If you are interested in neuroscience and looking for ways to get involved on campus, feel free to email us at umtuns@gmail.com, join our OrgSync page, or subscribe to our Facebook group at UMiami TUNS.
Fairwell, Alida!

It is with great regret that we announce the resignation of our long-time Academic Advisor, Alida Lambert. Alida will be leaving the University of Miami on November 7th to assume her new role as Data Analyst with Brand Networks in Boston, MA. Even though we are sad to see her leave, we couldn't be happier to see her take the next step in her career.

Alida has been a fixture of the UASP office since she joined us as a Peer Advising Liaison (PAL) in Fall 2009. After graduating with a B.A. in Psychology, Alida returned to our office as a full-time professional Academic Advisor where she has worked for the past three years. Alida has been an integral member of our office as she has served an important role in helping students through our Department’s largest-ever curriculum changes, building connections with other on-campus units, serving as the author/creator of the psych newsletter, and much more.

In August, Alida completed her M.S.Ed. in Research, Measurement, and Evaluation through the University’s School of Education, which provided her with the perfect credential to enter her new Data Analyst position.

As a Data Analyst at Brand Networks, Alida will work with various advertising agencies and highly-recognizable clients (e.g., American Express) by using “big data” to inform social media marketing and advertising campaign practices. Feel free to check out Brand Networks at www.bn.co or https://www.facebook.com/brandnetworks. We have no doubt Alida will be an invaluable asset to her new company.

Please join us congratulating Alida on her new position and wishing her nothing but the best in the future. Congratulations, Alida!

Thank you for 3 incredible years!