Distinguished Scholars 2019/2020

Supporting the advancement of elite graduate students on their journeys toward becoming leaders in behavioral science.

The Distinguished Scholars:

Abigail Blackman, MS, BCBA, *University of Kansas*
Tyler G. Erath, MA, *University of Kansas*
Maya Fallon, BA, *Calfornia State University, Northridge*
Kaitlynn Gokey, MS, BCBA, *Florida Institute of Technology**
Alyssa Jewett, MA, BCBA, *Western Michigan University*
Matthew Laske, BS, *Appalachian State University*
Nicholas Matey, MS, *University of Florida*
Jessica Mias, MS, BCBA, *Simmons University*
Sandhya Rajagopal, MS, BCBA, *Florida Institute of Technology*
Alyssa Rojas, BS, *California State University, Northridge*
Andressa Sleiman, MS, BCBA, *University of Florida*
Valeria Squatrito, MA, *Kore University, Enna (Italy)*
Catherine Williams, BS, *West Virginia University*

*Ms. Gokey will be graduating 2019, leaving the group.

The Leaders:

Mary Sawyer, PhD, BCBA-D
Fit Learning Atlanta & TEAM Coaching
Amanda P. Laprime, PhD, BCBA-D
The Center for Children with Special Needs & Assistant to CCBS Executive Director

Mary Sawyer, PhD, BCBA-D

Dr. Mary Sawyer, BCBA-D, earned her PhD in Special Education and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) from the Ohio State University. Prior to her doctorate, Dr. Sawyer earned an M.A. in Special Education, an M.A. in ABA, a graduate certificate in Positive Behavior Support, and a B.S. in Elementary Education, all from the University of South Florida. She is a Certified Educator in Elementary Education, Special Education, and English Speakers of Other Languages. In partnership with Dr. Aubrey Daniels, Dr. Sawyer is Co-Founder of Fit Learning Atlanta, a 1:1 learning laboratory, and TEAM Coaching, a school-based teacher training and coaching group. Additionally, Dr. Sawyer is adjunct faculty for the ABA graduate program at Georgia State University. She serves as the AVP of Scientific and Academic Affairs for the Standard Celeration Society and as the Distinguished Scholars Advisor for the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies. She is passionate about applying the science of behavior analysis to rapidly accelerate academic outcomes and to create nurturing environments in which individuals of all ages thrive.

Amanda P. Laprime, PhD, BCBA-D

Dr. Laprime currently serves as the Assistant to the Executive Director of the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies™. She was nominated for this position by the Board of Directors after becoming a member of the first Exceptional Student Group, and then an Advisor to the center. Amanda has completed a variety of projects for the center that have included an overview of the history of CCBS, a history presentation at the 2014 Annual Meeting, and the development of CE's for the CCBS book, *Behavioral Science: Tales of Inspiration, Discovery, and Science*. Amanda is helping to lead the Exceptional Student Group and organize the students in the participation of a variety of projects which include the development of ancillary materials to support the use of the CCBS book as a text for graduate courses in applied behavior analysis. Amanda completed her master's degree at Northeastern University under the guidance of Dr. Gary Pace, and her doctorate at Simmons College under the guidance of Dr. Ron Allen, Dr. Judah Axe, and Dr. Russell Maguire. Amanda currently works as a Program Coordinator at the Center for Children with Special Needs in Glastonbury, CT. In addition to her work with the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies™, Amanda has published research in peer-reviewed journals, presented at local and national conferences, and currently serves as a part-time lecturer for Northeastern University, an adjunct faculty at the University of Saint Joseph, and an expert consultant and course developer to Post University's departments of Human Services and Education.

Abigail Blackman, MS, BCBA

Abigail Blackman is a second-year doctoral student in the Performance Management Laboratory at the University of Kansas, working under the supervision of Dr. Florence DiGennaro Reed. She received her Master's in ABA and OBM at Florida Institute of Technology, while working with Drs. Christopher Podlesnik and Corina Jimenez-Gomez. Abby's research interests include evaluating resource efficient, yet effective, staff training practices and the potential efficacy of using various technologies to deliver training within human service settings. She has experience teaching an undergraduate behavioral science course, supervising undergraduate students within an early intervention classroom and an OBM practicum, and consulting with a staff training department at a local agency. In her free time, she enjoys FaceTiming her nephew and practicing yoga.

Tyler G. Erath, MA

Tyler Erath, MA, is a third-year doctoral student in the department of applied behavioral science at the University of Kansas working under the supervision of Dr. Florence DiGennaro Reed in the Performance Management Laboratory. He obtained his bachelor's degree in psychology and his master's degree in experimental psychology from Appalachian State University, working with Dr. Cynthia Anderson. Tyler's research interests include staff training, performance management, and behavioral consultation. Currently, he is pursuing a thematic line of research that seeks to enhance the implementation integrity of evidence-based training practices within a human service setting. Tyler has served as a guest reviewer for peer-reviewed journals, a practicum supervisor for undergraduate students interested in OBM, and the instructor of record for an introductory course on child development. In his free time, he enjoys cooking, exploring the outdoors, and chatting about craft beer.

Maya Fallon, BA

Maya Fallon is a second-year in the Masters of Science Applied Behavior Analysis program at California State University, Northridge studying under the mentorship of Dr. Stephanie Hood. As a graduate research assistant, Maya works with individuals with social skill deficits and evaluates procedures to increase advanced social skills. Her research currently includes evaluating procedures to increase recall and problem solving on conversational skills. She enjoys researching conversation skills and hopes to continue to work in this understudied area. Upon earning her master's degree, she will join Dr. Kevin Luczynski this fall at the University of Nebraska Medical Center as she starts the doctorate program in Applied Behavior Analysis.

Kaitlynn Gokey, MS, BCBA

Kaitlynn Gokey received her Masters of Science at Florida Institute of Technology in 2012 and received her BCBA the same year. She is currently a PhD candidate in Behavior Analysis at Florida Tech, and a 2018 recipient of the Outstanding Graduate Student Award. Kaitlynn has experience with a variety of populations, including autism, traumatic brain injury, dementia, ADHD, and Down Syndrome. She has also published in the Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, and has a number of presentations. Her primary research interests are self-control and impulsivity, cat behavior, science literacy, and dissemination. For her dissertation, Kaitlynn will be piloting a self-control and delay tolerance training package with neurotypical school-age children.

Kaitlynn will be graduating in 2019 and will be leaving the Distinguished Scholar group at that time.

Alyssa Jewett, MA, BCBA

Alyssa Jewett is a BCBA and third-year doctoral student at Western Michigan University. Alyssa received her master's degree in behavior analysis with a focus on early intervention and organizational behavior management from Western Michigan University in 2013. Upon receiving her master's degree, Alyssa worked as a clinician at Trumpet Behavioral Health in California and Colorado, where she, developed interventions for individuals diagnosed with autism and developmental disabilities, supervised BCBA fieldwork, and oversaw operations at Trumpet's South Denver Center. After spending four years in the field, Alyssa re-joined Western Michigan University as a doctoral student in 2017. Alyssa has a variety of experience teaching undergraduate courses, including introduction to behavior analysis, introduction

Alyssa Jewett, MA, BCBA *(continued)*

to psychology, concepts and principles in behavior analysis, and research methods/statistics. She's published research on teaching feminine hygiene skills to young females with ASD and is currently working on research related to supervision best practices in the field of behavior analysis. Alyssa is the chair of the Behavior Analysis Graduate Student Organization at WMU and serves as an executive member of the Michigan Autism Conference planning committee. Her interests include school-based consulting, effective teaching strategies, supervision, and instructional design.

Matthew Laske, BS

Matthew Laske is a second-year masters student in the industrial-organizational psychology and human resource management program at Appalachian State University working under the guidance of Dr. Timothy Ludwig. He completed his bachelor's degree in behavioral sciences from Western Michigan University. Previously, he has worked in autism and in various school districts implementing evidence-based interventions and direct instruction curriculums. Currently, he is a project lead for the safety analytics team seeking to identify variables that are most predictive of adverse safety outcomes. His research interests include the investigation of the function of different features of feedback, behavioral skills training for public speaking behaviors, and how data analytics can be an effective tool for pinpointing life critical behaviors in safety. In his free time, Matthew enjoys hiking, biking, and anything involving basketball.

Nicholas Matey, MS

Nick has an interest in applying behavior science to occupational safety, training, and leadership development. Nick has experience applying behavioral science in a variety of settings, from the Fortune 30, to small businesses alike. Nick holds a Master's degree in Behavior Analysis and Organizational Behavior Management, from Florida Institute of Technology. Currently, Nick is a doctoral student in Behavior Analysis, at the University of Florida, under Nicole Gravina, PhD.

Jessica Mias, MS, BCBA

Jessica Mias is a doctoral student at Simmons University, pursuing a PhD in Applied Behavior Analysis under the advisement of Dr. Gretchen A. Dittrich. She earned her Master's degree in Early Childhood Education at Eastern Connecticut State University and was a teacher prior to becoming a BCBA. Her research interests are varied and include increasing activity for healthy, underactive adults, instructional and curriculum design for individuals with developmental disabilities, as well as the establishment of stimulus control for auditory-visual conditional discrimination tasks. Jessica currently serves as District BCBA for a public school district. In addition, Jessica is a part-time lecturer at Northeastern University, and has been an adjunct instructor at Simmons University.

Sandhya Rajagopal, MS, BCBA

Sandhya Rajagopal received her Master of Science degree in Applied Behavior Analysis and Organizational Behavior Management from Florida Tech in July 2017. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Behavior Analysis at Florida Tech under the advisement of Dr. Katie Nicholson, and she was admitted to candidacy in April 2019. She has experience working and conducting research with children and adults with autism and older adults with Alzheimer's dementia. Sandhya's primary research interests are in verbal behavior and teaching children with autism to tact private events. She is currently conducting a research study on this topic that was funded by the Organization for Autism Research's Graduate Research Grant Program, and plans to continue this line of research through her dissertation.

Alyssa Rojas, BS

Alyssa Rojas is a first-year graduate student in California State Northridge's master's in applied behavior analysis program. Along with pursuing her master's, she provides behavioral services as an RBT® to children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. She has played a key role in the development and implementation of research in the Functional Assessment and Healthy Behaviors Lab under the advisement of Dr. Fahmie. She has extended previous research and approached problem behavior by intervening before problem behavior becomes severe. As a graduate research assistant, she has conducted direct assessments in preschool classrooms, identified maintaining variables for those exhibiting problem behaviors and has created individualized function-based treatments. She has conducted functional analyses proactively, such that rather than conducting this analysis after problem behavior has already emerged, she screens for risk factors and creates preventative function-based treatments before problem behavior becomes severe. Her main area of interest is to extend her current research to those on the autism spectrum. She looks forward to continuing her contributions to this field as an active researcher and plans to pursue her PhD in applied behavior analysis.

Andressa Sleiman, MS, BCBA

Andressa Sleiman, MS, BCBA, earned her Masters of Science degree in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Organizational Behavior Management (OBM) from Florida Institute of Technology (FIT) in 2017. She is currently pursuing her PhD at the University of Florida under the supervision and guidance of Nicole Gravina, PhD Andressa has been in the field of ABA since 2011 and has worked with individuals with developmental disabilities, typically developing children and adults, and as an internal OBM consultant. Andressa's general research interests include OBM, process improvement, behavioral economics, determinants of reinforcement, training, dissemination of ABA and OBM, and science literacy.

Valeria Squatrito, MA

Valeria Squatrito is a PhD student in the doctorate program in "Social Inclusion in Multicultural Contexts" at Kore University of Enna (Italy). She was born and raised in Sicily and in 2011 she entered the BA program in Psychology and she immediately started to get interested in research, on the recognition of emotions as a first start. To get her MA degree Valeria presented a thesis on IRAP and religious prejudice. For this research she was honored with the ACBS Junior Investigator Poster Award at ACBS World Conference 15 in 2017 in Seville (Spain). She is interested in Clinical Psychology, Social Psychology and Behavioral Sciences, Web Communication and Social Media and Facial Action Coding System (FACS). She has attended in several conferences, such as ACBS World Conference 15 in 2017 and 8th EABA conference in 2016, presenting symposia and posters.

Catherine Williams, BS

Catherine Williams *(formerly Stephens)* is a graduate student in the Behavior Analysis PhD program at West Virginia University. She received her B.S. in psychology from Georgia Tech, where she worked with Dr. Jack Marr and developed an interest in using behavior analysis to improve education. Currently, she is conducting research with Dr. Claire St. Peter to investigate interventions to improve post-secondary education. Her research interests include the use of both basic and applied research studying contingencies related to education. Catherine would like to develop practical ways of modifying college classes that increase student and teacher performance. She also hopes to learn about policy making to facilitate system-level changes that incorporate behavior-analytic strategies into widespread educational practices.