Welcome to the Fall edition of the Sociology program newsletter. We have lots to share with you in this edition. We have a wonderful submission from one of recent Sociology graduates, some updates from our recent experiences at the American Sociological Association annual meeting, and several new resources to share with you. But the main focus is on our recent Commencement ceremony in San Diego at the Viejas Arena that saw 1500 students graduate in front of family, friends and some very proud faculty members. The graduation weekend began with an on-campus event on the Saturday where Dr. Jennifer Rosen and I had the wonderful opportunity to meet some of our Sociology graduates. Then on the big day we get all dressed up in our regalia to celebrate the achievements of our 2015 graduates in style! The graduates always comment how the faculty look like the faculty of Hogwarts in their doctoral regalia! In the group photo above are some faculty that students may know or have in courses in the future (left to right: Dr. Justin Harrison, Dean of DoGE and faculty in Philosophy; Dr. Jennifer Rosen, full-time faculty in Sociology; Dr. Adam Selhorst, Exec Dean of CoLA and faculty in Science; Dr. Eric Klein, Assoc Dean of CoLA and faculty in Psychology; Dr. Elaine Alden, Program Chair and faculty of Sociology; Dr. Jeff Hall, faculty in DoGE: and Molly Molnar, MA, faculty in DoGE.)

- Dr. A
Hi, my name is Tamara Buford and I recently received my Bachelor degree in Sociology and Psychology at Ashford University. I live in Auburn, Al, and I’ve been married for nine years to my husband Sherman Buford and we have three wonderful daughters ranging from eight to one year old. I plan to continue my education with Ashford University and enroll in the Master of Arts in Psychology program.

I began taking courses at Ashford University in 2010. I had to learn how to discipline my time and schedule. My first year was difficult because I thought my discussion, journal and assignment were not time consuming and I did my work at the last minute. I was wrong, the instructors opened up another level of being proactive in class from researching informative information to critically thinking about topics for each week. With the support of my husband I had to learn how to set goals, write out a to-do list and prioritize my time. I began to set reminders in my phone and write out my work and school schedule on a calendar for each month. At the time I was working as a dispatcher for a local police department and my hours were long and I was pregnant with my second child. I decided to take a year off from school, and once I returned I focused on my courses and making good connections with my instructor and classmates, it helped me to understand the topics better and relate it to everyday events around me and in the world. Being opened to change and classmate viewpoints helped me to connect with my class. There are so many views and concepts of the same topic in the class discussion it helped me to view the information in a different way. The instructors challenged each student to critically think and apply the information to the world around us.

At the end of my four year period with the Ashford University programs of Sociology and Psychology, I was able to research information at a higher level, use the information I learned personally and professionally, collaborate with others in my field on specific topics and I developed good habits and skills throughout the years. I love Ashford University because the instructors and advisors want to see you succeed in all your classes. I felt like my success was their success, they made sure I was up to date with resources including career center, writing center and professional webinars for writing center, and the library database.

If I can give any advice for other students, it would be to take advantage of the resources at Ashford and stay connected with your instructors during the five weeks of class. The resources at Ashford are very informative and it can help you throughout your courses and with written assignments etc. It has helped me a countless number of times during assignments and in my capstone courses. I also stayed in contact with my instructor via phone and emails when my computer crashed, during my pregnancy and labor with third baby girl and other reasons. They were very understanding and understood things happen and come up sometimes. I urge you not to give up but continue being persistent, focus and believing in yourself.

Sincerely, Tamara Buford

Mrs. Buford is now a student in Ashford’s Master of Art program in Psychology, and a recent recipient of a BA in Sociology and Psychology. Dr. Jennifer Rosen and I had the privilege of meeting Tamara and her lovely family during the recent commencement weekend. We were so impressed with Tamara and her husband Sherman (also a recent BA in Social and Criminal Justice graduate!), that we felt compelled to ask her to share her story and her words of wisdom to inspire our current students. Not only is Tamara pictured with us on the front cover of this Quarter’s newsletter, but you may also recognize Tamara and her family from the amazing photos posted of them on the Ashford Facebook page during commencement weekend!

We are so proud of your achievement Tamara and Sherman and we wish you the very best for the future!

Best from Dr. A, Dr. Jennifer Rosen, and the Sociology program at Ashford.
Learning about Sociology: What is ‘Socialism’?

The run up to next year’s Presidential election is starting to heat up with some lively and engaging political debates. I encourage Sociology faculty and students alike to watch the debates, engage in the process, maybe even like me, volunteer for your candidate to do your part for the democratic process. This can lead to some application of what is going on outside of the classroom to discussions within as we discuss many of the social issues that politicians seek to implement through policy. Sociologists have a unique role in that regard, in that much of what we do can be used to influence political policy and social change. But one word always seems to come up in the political season and it has gotten a bit of a bad rap...‘Socialism’. “Socialism is a political and economic theory of social organization that advocates that the means of production, distribution and exchange should be owned or regulated by the community as a whole” (AJ+, 2015). Meaning we as citizens should have an engaged role in what occurs within our society and the rich or power elite shouldn’t call all the shots on what happens economically. When presented in this way it doesn’t seem like such a bad thing because we as citizens should be engaged in what happens and we should hold those in ‘power’ accountable—they are representing us after all. As you will discuss in some of our Sociology courses we do have important elements of our society that are already socialist in concept. To learn more here is a video from Films for Action —http://www.filmsforaction.org/watch/5-ways-america-is-already-socialist/

The Challenge of Choosing a Major...

Deciding on what to major in can be a difficult choice. You want to make sure that you are interested in the subject matter because you will likely spend many hours reading and discussing in the field. You also want to be sure that your major will help you land the type of job you want, but also that you will be likely to land a job once you graduate. As a result, the National Center for Educational Statistics estimates that about 80% of undergraduate students switch majors at least once. Recently, the National Science Foundation funded a study that followed a cohort of sociology majors from their senior year in college (2012) to their post-graduate experiences (2014). When asked, “If you had to do it all over again, would you choose sociology as your undergraduate major field of study,” a full 50% of the respondents replied “definitely” and another 25% said “probably.” In addition, the study found that 94.7% of the respondents were either working full-time and/or enrolled in graduate school or an internship. Therefore, only 5.3% were neither employed or enrolled in further education, compared to a 6.8% unemployment rate overall. In addition, the respondents reported that the top five sociological skills that helped them in their job were (in rank order): the sociological imagination, sociological concepts/theories, data analysis, research design, and alternative or critical perspectives. Hopefully this research helps reinforce that you choose the right major! To read the full report, please see http://asanet.org/documents/research/pdfs/Bach_Beyond_MajorAgain.pdf - Jennifer Rosen, PhD

How about a Minor in Journalism?

A great way to enhance your Sociology Major is to tag on a Minor which may support your future career aims. One example is the Minor in Journalism which could potentially lead to a career in reporting on social issues, as well as highlighting and influencing social change through reporting and communicating through varied forms of media. Sociology majors who minor in Journalism may also be interested in graduate degrees in Media and Society, where the influence of media reporting is highlighted based on its impacts and opportunities to inform society. Sociology can cover many forms of social issues and support many issues pertaining to specific groups in society (women, the young, racial groups, etc.). Similarly journalism can cover many forms of media—visual (photography, film), broadcast, newspapers, book publishing, web sites, and blogging. The combination is also broad in that issues can be local, national or global. For example: the UC Berkeley student pictured here is a Sociology and Journalism major who plans to use her education to highlight the issues of women around the world through short documentary film making.

Speak to your Student Advisor ASAP if adding a Minor in Journalism to your Sociology Major appeals to you!
First, I want to start off by saying congratulations to all of the students who graduated this fall! Your hard work, commitment, and perseverance has all paid off!! And the loving support of your friends and family was amazing. Participating in the commencement ceremony this fall was an emotionally moving experience for me. It was the first Ashford graduation that I have had the pleasure to take part in and was amazed to see over 1,400 students and their families gather together for such an important and life-changing event. Having all these people who have worked incredibly hard to achieve their dreams together in one room really inspired me to work even harder to mentor students to achieve their goals. I had the chance to speak with several sociology students during the College of Liberal Arts Meet and Greet. Their stories were incredibly moving and motivating. One woman I spoke to, a mother of three young daughters, had overcome many challenges to be the first member of her family to graduate from college. Both her and her husband graduated from Ashford University this fall, and when I asked her oldest daughter if she was proud of her mom, her eyes lit up and she gave me an emphatic YES! The opportunity to see her parents walk up on that stage and get their degree after years of staying up late studying set the bar high for those three little girls (and all of the children who watched their parents and grandparents graduate). Now, they know that they can aspire to earning their college degree. I want to send the most heartfelt congratulations to all of the recent Ashford graduates, and for all of those currently working towards their goal of earning a degree in Sociology, keep up the hard work… your goals are within your reach!!

Jenn’s Perspective…

by Dr. Jennifer Rosen, Assistant Professor, Sociology

On the AU Graduation Festivities...

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On the Summer 2015 ASA Annual Meeting...

This August, I had the opportunity to travel to Chicago, IL to present a paper I wrote at the American Sociological Association (ASA) annual conference. The conference took place over four days and included over 4,600 sociologists presenting papers on nearly 600 panel sessions. Panels generally last about 2 hours with anywhere between two to six papers presented to audiences that range from just a handful of people to hundreds of people. The theme of this year’s conference was “Sexualities in the Social World,” however the topics of panel presentations varied a lot – encompassing topics within the areas of race, class, gender, religion, criminal justice, politics, etc. I even saw one panel with papers examining the parent-like relationship between people and their pets! So, there is a panel session on just about anything you could possibly be interested in. I went to several panel sessions during my time at ASA this year and caught up with many old friends. There are also receptions held for all of the major sociology sub-sections. I am a member of the sub-section of Sex and Gender, Political Sociology, and the Sociology of Development, and I attended each reception, each of which was held at local restaurants. These receptions are a time to network with other sociologists in your field and find out about what research projects people are working on. It was a great few days and I was happy to represent all of the sociology students at Ashford University!
Ashford University is a vibrant community that offers effective learning online. Whether you pursue your education on line or in the traditional college experience, you'll find both infused with the same history of academic excellence.

Photo References:
Graduation photos courtesy of Ashford Marketing and DoGE faculty member Molly Molnar.
UC Berkeley student in Journalism Minor Section [Source: http://grad.berkeley.edu/news/headlines/honors-awards/aawu_silva/]

Editor:
Elaine Alden, PhD. Program Chair of Sociology, College of Liberal Arts, Ashford University

Be sure to engage with our AU Sociology and affiliated Communities on LinkedIn at AU Sociology Club
https://www.linkedin.com/grp/home?gid=5169150
AND now on Twitter— SOCatASHFORD
AND we are also affiliated with the new LGBTQI and Allies at AU Facebook group at
https://www.facebook.com/groups/472465186293410/

Sociology Program Pet Corner
This is a new ‘fun’ initiative to highlight the pets who help us teach and study late into the night. If you are a faculty member or student and would like to highlight your ‘study buddy’ here—please send to elaine.alden@ashford.edu a photo and small bio of you and your pet and how they help you with your work or studies. I'll start us off with the newest member of my family! - Dr. A

This is Duke Wellington. He had a tough history and was abused and neglected for most of his 8 years. He was rescued in June of this year in Mexico and he joined my family in August. Unlike my cat Coco who sits on my laptop, my books, my notepad, etc...Duke is far more supportive of my success at work and lays at my feet while I post discussion responses, grade assignments and answer emails. Duke likes green apples, cheese, playing catch, belly rubs and his sister kitty Coco (although she's not so keen on him!).