



# Winter 2021 The HELP! Newsletter

Volume 2 | Issue 2 | The University of North Georgia

## Editor's Note

We did it! We survived 2020! But before we rid ourselves of one of the most unprecedented years we have ever faced, let's take a moment to reflect on all of the great firsts that occurred. In 2020, we watched Hamilton, Tiger King, and I cried at every episode of [Some Good News](#) by John Krasinski. [Drive-in movie theatres](#) made a comeback and we [heard whales songs](#) more clearly. [Chris Nikic](#) became the first athlete with Down syndrome to complete an Ironman triathlon, Vanderbilt's [Sarah Fuller](#) became the first woman to play in a Power 5 Conference college football game, and [Jonny Kim](#), former Navy SEAL and Harvard Medical School graduate, became NASA's first Korean-American astronaut. [Animal shelters](#) were emptied, drive-by birthdays were a hit, and Zoom weddings were celebrated (the first dress I wore in 2020 was for my BFF's Carly & Kristina's Zoom wedding!). The end of 2020 gave us the [highest voter turnout](#) in the U.S. in 120 years and the COVID-19 vaccines. The world still found a way to celebrate life. We did in the HELP program too. In 2020, Six students graduated, the very first of the HELP program. We had 12 students who successfully defended prospectus. Students presented at national conferences and submitted scholarly publications, and everyone made some personal first steps towards their dissertation research. As a program, we had our first Grant Writing Academy, New Student Town Halls, HELP Workshops, and a full year of The HELP newsletters noting all of your accomplishments. For me, my first doctoral student successfully defended their dissertation, and while I know that should be their celebration over mine, as the major advisor, I added it to my Book of Firsts too, and reflected in gratitude and pride, knowing where I came from, to how lucky I am to share so many firsts with all of you. - KRA

One aspect I really appreciate about the HELP program is the amount of reflection contained within the coursework. Many of our discussion posts, assignments, and presentations include some level of personal experience and reflection. Dr. Adams recently created the "bingo card" on page seven of this newsletter, and I thought it was a fun way to think about the year 2020. As I went through each block, I started thinking of 2020 in a new light. I wasn't focused on the social unrest, politics, protests, lockdowns, masks, or what I couldn't do during 2020. Rather, I was quite surprised at what our family accomplished and God's many blessings we experienced in 2020. I would encourage you all to take a minute and use the bingo card to reframe what you experienced throughout a national crisis. Perhaps last year wasn't so bad, after all, hindsight is always 2020 right? I hope and pray that you walk away from 2020 with a new motivation to make 2021 your best year yet. Happy New Year! - RS

## **Faculty Spotlight**

**Dan Collier, PhD**



### **Tell us about yourself.**

I am currently a Research Associate at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research in Kalamazoo, MI and a Visiting Scholar at the UC-Irvine Law School. I was born and primarily raised in a working-class suburb in Chicago, IL but I spent most of my childhood summers in Appalachia KY and TN - doing all of the fun stuff. I am one of a low percentage of people who got kicked out of college (a community college of all places) only to return as an adult at the age of 24 to community college and eventually earn a Ph.D. I love being at/in Lake Michigan and I love tinkering on cars - currently, I have a fun lifted Subaru Outback Xt pushing close to 400hp. I am also an avid World of Warcraft player and a fan of the Dark Souls series.

### **Tell us about your professional activities.**

I currently serve as the Associate Editor for the Journal of Student Financial Aid. I am also a reviewer for several journals, including some of the top journals in our field - and I am involved with ASHE, AERA, AEFPP, and other professional organizations.

### **What are your research and/or professional interests?**

I have three main areas of research:

1. Student Loan Debt: Specifically, I examine issues surrounding income-driven repayment. We know little about these series of programs and my work has been one step towards understanding who may be enrolled in these programs and financially-related outcomes. I recently received a grant from UC-Irvine's Law School to further my research and generate some causal analyses.

2. The Kalamazoo Promise: I examine how to take the outcomes of KPromise a step further. I have developed qualitative and quantitative (descriptive and causal) analyses to examine KPromise student stop out, reenrollment, and persistence to a degree upon reenrollment. My work has begun to show the importance of a flexible tuition-free policy in that "one and done" elements are likely harming less advantaged students and that allowing for reenrollment provides less advantaged students a better chance to graduate.

3. Student Non-Cognitive Attributes and Food Security: Here, I have tested how students' non-cog attributes and food security influence first-year stop out. I led a unit that was primarily focused on this issue generating descriptive and causal analyses, including a random assignment on nudging - which produced a 12% increase in the first-year retention for at-risk students (we think by easing these students' food insecurity).

### **What advice do you have for EDD students?**

1. Be opening to learning new skills, and be comfortable in failure while learning new skills. You're not going to know everything and that is OK. But you can go to learn new things whenever you want. You will make mistakes and fail at some point... this is almost guaranteed. That's OK because we (faculty) are here to help. 2. Generally, try to make friends not enemies. I used the word generally because that's not always possible and as I tell Dr. Jameson Brewer (jokingly, to him) we all need a nemesis to push us harder. However, when you make friends you'll have better opportunities opened for you. In fact, my position at the W.E. Upjohn Institute is partly due to my abilities but also because I became friendly with individuals in the position to pull me over. 3. Be generous to others. Be the type of peer/colleague who is willing to help others through the program or in their careers. This who academia thing is based on communities lifting each other up - never forget this as you progress in the program and in your professional roles.

### **What do you enjoy doing outside of your professional role?**

My blue-collared roots are a significant part of who I am today and what I bring to the table as an academic - therefore, I keep my skillset working on cars up by modifying them and playing around. Once I get my Subaru wrapped up, my next build is going to be a 3rd Generation Camaro (which was my first car) with a LS swap. I also enjoy spending time at/in Lake Michigan - there is nothing better than jumping in the nice, cold lake on a hot day with my wife and dog.

## **Student Spotlight**

**Anna Gibbs ('23)**



### **Tell us about yourself.**

Hello, all! My name is Anna Beth Gibbs. I live in Albany, Ga and work as an instructor at Albany State University in the department of Health and Human Performance. I received my BS in Exercise Science and MS in Kinesiology from Georgia Southern University. Additionally, I am a certified Exercise Physiologist (ACSM) and Strength and Conditioning Specialist (NSCA). My lifelong passion is the utilization of exercise to mitigate the effects of chronic disease. My wonderful husband and I have been married for approximately one year. Together we have two spoiled fur babies, a golden retriever and a cat, that we love dearly. In my free time I enjoy long runs and talking with friends over a good cup of coffee!

### **Tell us about what previous professional roles you may have held.**

Prior to obtaining a position in higher education, I worked for the Southwest Georgia Council on Aging. The Southwest Georgia Council on Aging is non-profit that strives to meet the physical, spiritual and mental health of aging Georgians. At the council, I managed the 14 county senior life enrichment centers. Each center had a manager and assistant manager, which I oversaw completion of daily tasks and fiscal operations. Each center provided nutritional services, wellness, and transportation services for local seniors. Through the council's services seniors could count on a hot meal, socialization, engaging exercise, developmental workshops, and transportation to doctors appointments. This professional role was highly rewarding and I took away numerous transferable skills to apply within the higher education setting.

### **What has been the most rewarding aspect of the EDD program thus far?**

The most rewarding aspect of the EDD program has been the opportunity to learn from others. The professors in the program provide wonderful feedback and ample opportunities to engage in the coursework. The programs cohort-style provides amazing peer feedback and support.

### **What is the best advice you would give a new student or potential applicant?**

Reflect on what your passions before entering the program. The program is exciting if you love what you are researching!

### **What is your area of research for your dissertation?**

My dissertation research interests include wellness programming in Minority Serving Institutions.

### **What has been your experience learning in an online platform? Any Surprises?**

It surprised me how much I truly love learning in an online platform! The overall experience has been positive. Through discussions and the group me, I feel as if I know everyone in my cohort. The professor's availability and efforts to communicate has provided much needed support in my first semester. Even though the program is through an online platform, it truly has a family feel!

### **How do you manage the work-family-life-school balance?**

Schedule EVERYTHING, even time to take a break! It may seem silly but working full time, I often complete schoolwork at home. Knowing I have something to do makes it hard for me to step away. Scheduling meaningful family time or a "brain break" to do something fun has become very important for me.

### **What are your personal hobbies or ways in which you decompress from work and academics?**

Going for a leisure run outside is the best way I decompress. Getting to be alone surrounded by nature clears my mind and changes my attitude.

### **What is your favorite place you have visited, and why?**

Florence, Italy. The entire city has a Renaissance feel with unbelievable sites. Plus, the Tuscan region has the best coffee, pasta, and wine!

### **If you had to choose ONE superhero ability, what would it be and why?**

Talk to animals, because how cool would that be?!

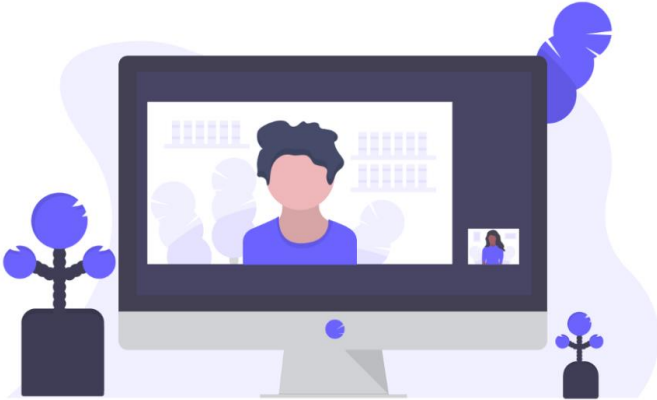
### **If you were stranded on a desert island and had all the food and water you needed to survive, what additional two items would you bring with you?**

A lighter and pop-up tent. After binge watching the show Alone over quarantine, I feel shelter and warmth are vital to survival.

## Mental Health Corner

### The bizarre effects of virtual meeting on your mental health

Too many virtual meetings are bad for you. Here's why.



\*\*\*Click the image above and below for information regarding online meeting fatigue and defending your dissertation/prospectus virtually\*\*\*

*“Advice for Remote Dissertation/Thesis Defenses”*  
By: The Graduate School at the University of Maryland



## Mark Your Calendar!

### Spring 2021 Dates

Spring Classes Begin: 01/11

HELP Mental Help Break: 03/15-03/19

Spring Classes End: 04/30

Final Exams (online): 05/03-05/07

Spring Graduation Dates: 05/07-05/09

HELP Dissertation Submission Deadline: 05/10

### Summer 2021 Dates

Summer TAP Application Deadline: 04/15

Summer TAP Registrations: 05/17

## HELP Spread the Word!

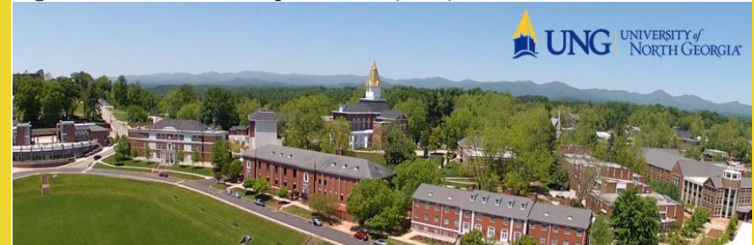
The HELP program will be having our first virtual information session on

**Monday, February 1, 2021 at 6:30p.m.**

Our doctoral program has been fortunate that our best recruitment has come from our current students, and so we would be happy if you had any ideas of where to share this information. The information page for the Ed.D. program session is:

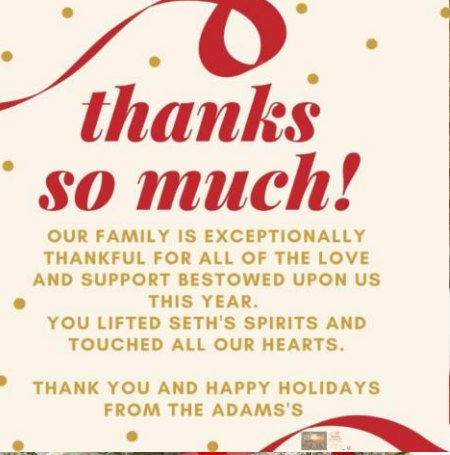
<https://enroll.ung.edu/portal/eddinfo> or click the image below.

Higher Education Leadership & Practice (Ed.D.) Info Session



It's time to earn your Ed.D. at UNG!

SENDING  
*Christmas*  
WISHES



# Thank You!

While Thanksgiving may have passed, it is never an inappropriate time to express your gratitude for those who support you. Every student can think of someone who has gone above and beyond to support their educational pursuits, inspire their performance, or just offered encouragement to persevere through life's challenges. We asked our students to send in a "thank you note" to those who have made a large impact on their lives. Here are their responses:

**Ken Crowe:** My biggest THANK YOU goes to my wife, Lori, who stood beside me during the challenges of this year. That's her and me trying to pick out a fir tree in the photo [see Christmas Card Page]

**Brooklyn Herrera:** To Elizabeth Hutchins, Year 3 HELP Student - Elizabeth is a colleague and friend of mine at Dalton State College. She continuously encouraged me to apply to the HELP program when I questioned my ability. She continues to be my biggest cheerleader with constant check-ins and advice. I am so thankful to have support from UNG faculty as well as on our campus.

**Ashlee Pollard:** To Michael Lanford and Katherine Adams - Thank you for the countless phone calls, emails with feedback or advice, and overall encouragement towards my journey so far. I'm grateful to not only know you as committee members and professors but also as advocates and leaders. Your hard work, kindness, and commitment to student support makes such a difference to all students in this program. It has certainly made a difference in my life as well. On behalf of a first-gen student whose parents will definitely be crying at graduation, I appreciate you both very much!

**Juman Al Bukarhi:** I want to thank my husband, Abbas Jabbar, who has inspired me to apply to the Ed.D. program at UNG and continued to encourage me to keep going during the 2020 hardships. Also, I want to send special thanks and appreciation to my mom, Tahani Almasri, who has been next to me during my entire journey in the US. She supported me in so many ways and in the best way she could. I cannot thank her enough.

**Ross Skilling:** To my wife Lindsey Skilling who has supported me throughout this program more than words can describe. She was the one who initially found this program, encouraged me to apply, and figured out how to "make it work" with our busy schedule. She delivered our fourth child, homeschooled a 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grader, raised our younger two, and managed our household all while ensuring I had enough time to work and study. I truly could not have done this program without such a loving and supportive wife. Thank you!

**Nicole Wilcox:** I want to take a moment to thank the members of my cohort (Class of 2023) for making the first semester transition into doctoral studies as smooth and enjoyable as it has been, even under the unique challenge of beginning our studies during a global pandemic. I'm so excited to be on this journey with an amazingly kind group of people. I also want to highlight the unparalleled work (and patience) that our professors do (and have) for us during this challenging time. Thank you for all the hard work you do to keep us going (and often our heads above water!). I am also continually thankful for my best friend (since 6th grade) and husband (3 years in October! Woot!), Kyle for his incredible patience and understanding on the days my eyes are glued to my computer and for his love and kindness in support of the belief that I can and will achieve anything I set my mind to. Finally, I want to thank my goldendoodle, Porter for warming my toes and keeping me company during my long evenings in the office. Her unconditional love is something I will never take for granted! I don't believe this world will ever truly deserve the perfection of dogs.



HELP 2020 SURVIVAL

# Bingo

ATTENDED A HELP WORKSHOP OR TOWN HALL	ADOPTED A PET	CAME UP WITH YOUR DISSERTATION TOPIC	CUT YOUR OWN HAIR	WENT A WEEK WITHOUT DRIVING
MADE HOME RENOVATIONS	COOKED A NEW MEAL	VOTED	COMPLETED A CHAPTER DRAFT	ATTENDED A MEETING IN PAJAMAS
PASSED DISSERTATION	ATTENDED A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE	Free	STARTED A NEW HOBBY	SAW MAISIE ON ZOOM WITH DR. LANFORD
RECEIVED FEEDBACK FROM DR. ADAMS CONTAINING SPELLING ERRORS	BINGED A TV SERIES	THANKFUL TO BE IN AN ALREADY ONLINE PROGRAM	PASSED PROSPECTUS	WAS IN THE HELP NEWSLETTER
TOOK A MENTAL HEALTH DAY	SPENT TIME WITH NATURE	REVIVED YOUR HOME OFFICE	FORMED YOUR DOCTORAL COMMITTEE	LISTENED TO THE FULL MESSAGE RE: YOUR CAR'S EXTENDED WARRANTY



## Student Accomplishments

Congratulations! Please continue to update us here [link](#)

**Mario Sheats**– Attained a major goal and milestone in his career by earning an assistant director position. He will be moving to Mobile, AL and work as the Assistant Director of Student Disability Services at the University of South Alabama.

**Ken Crowe**– Survived an incredibly difficult year in the midst of a pandemic. On 1/10/2020 he was diagnosed with prostate cancer and on 3/6/2020 he received brachytherapy to treat it. The treatment was effective and is in good health now. On 9/28/2020, he was able to successfully defend his prospectus and later that evening he lost his mom unexpectedly. His father and their family is adjusting to this “new normal” and working through all the first milestone dates (birthdays, holidays, etc.). Combining all these events with incredible challenge of leading a facilities organization through the pandemic made 2020 quite the year for Ken!

**Nicole Wilcox**– Nominated for the 2020 Staff Award for Excellence in Customer Service at KSU. In addition, she was promoted to a Program Coordinator with the Department of Psychological Science which will allow her to serve as a part-time instructor.

**Juman Al Bukhari**– Continued growing her project on assisting Jordanian student’s understanding of the American higher education system and graduate school applications. She now has 7,100 Jordanian students who have joined the UNG and other U.S. institutions. Additionally, Juman completed her first three chapters for her prospectus while teaching 18 credits, advising students, chairing the University Technology Committee, and representing her department as a senator in the faculty senate.

**James Blackburn, Walt Justice, Bob Myers**- Will be presenting at the Eastern Educational Research Association's (EERA) 44th Annual Virtual Conference in February. Their proposal, "Design Thinking as an Approach to Leadership," was accepted and they will present their research in a panel discussion format.

**Yizhe Huang**- Presented in the Conference on Higher Education in China at the University of Manchester, UK. Her topic was “The experiences of Chinese international students in the US during the COVID-19 pandemic.” A recording of the presentation can be found at the following [link](#).

## Successful Milestone Defense Announcements

Congratulations to those of you who have successfully defended your prospectus or dissertation defenses! Good luck on the rest of your research and future endeavors!

### Doctoral Defenses

**Ross Skilling**: A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TACTICAL OFFICER LEADERSHIP BEHAVIORS AND CADET PERFORMANCE AT THE UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY

**David Yenerall**: HOW COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AFFECTS STUDENT PERCEPTION AND COMPREHENSION OF ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION IN AN INTRODUCTORY ASTRONOMY CLASS

**Tatiana Maslova**: SELF-EFFICACY-BASED INSTRUCTIONAL METHOD FOR STRATEGIC SELF-REGULATION OF RUSSIAN AT THE NOVICE LEVEL

### Prospectus Defenses

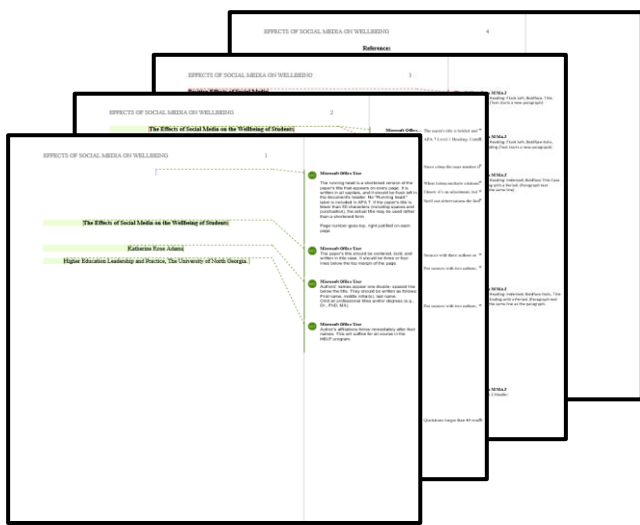
**James Blackburn**: *Narrative-based Messaging’s Influence on the Economic Intents of Undergraduate Students*

**Erika Garvett**: *From Chief Diversity Officer to Higher Education President: A New Path to the Higher Education Presidency*



## HELP Repository Additions

Katherine Adams and Ross Skilling developed an APA 7 guide for HELP-specific papers. What started as a decision to use the publication style formatting for title pages and wanting to provide a one-page example turned into a four-page document on the most recurring APA 7 issues we see in our program and some helpful tips. This guide was purposefully created in a Word document so that you could use to your benefit. You can find the guide by clicking the image below and in the APA section of the HELP Repository.



**Grant Writing Academy** Thank you for everyone who attended the inaugural HELP Grant Writing Academy, kicking off with the sponsored workshop on December 7, 2020. The application for the **Excellence in Doctoral Research Award is due April 15, 2021**. Funds may be requested for supplies, expenses, and travel associated with conducting dissertation research. There will be two awards granted for \$500. Participation in the Grant Writing Workshop was required to be eligible and apply for the grant review and scholarship. [See the Application Here](#). We can't wait for the next one (which will be recorded in the future and tailored more specifically towards HELP students), so there will be future opportunities to participate.

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## HELP Workshops

Thank you for those that attended the HELP Workshops in the fall (formerly Town Halls). Based on the results of the student survey, this spring we will have 3-4 more workshops on the following general topics: Writing for Publication, a Leadership Panel (with HEI presidents, directors, and deans), and a *What's Next?* panel with Ed.D graduates who are 5+ years post-graduation. We will also have a series of Research Topics (that will also be open to the full COE faculty) and will be sharing those details with you soon. As always, the information on the workshops will be located in the HELP Student Repository.

## HELP Program Flyer

Our latest recruitment brochures are in. Please click the image below and follow the link to view the full version. Feel free to share with colleague or potential students you know!



## HELP Newsletter Feedback



Please tell us what you think of the HELP Newsletter! Click the button to the left to let us know how we can improve our communication and better serve the students and faculty of the HELP program. We hope that you have found this edition to be a source of inspiration.