

## **Nadia Webb, 2014 GSAPP Distinguished Career Achievement Award**

These remarks were given by Nadia Webb in September, 2014 during the awards presentation.

Thank you to the alumni association and to the faculty who nominated and supported me – both when I was a student and after. It is a profoundly meaningful award for me, partly because this award is for many of the same personal qualities that dismayed you when I was a graduate student. Such as:

Meandering through adjacent professions, staggering my add/drops so I could take 21 credits, deciding I'd be a bonehead not to ask (only once!) for supervision from every psychologist whose books I admired, teaching 6 credits each term to have free parking and no student loan debt. These choices generated questions about my character, mental health, and whether I was a PhD student in PsyD clothing. I was accepted to Rutgers the second time around, failed my comprehensives, and spent many afternoons in Stan Messer's office, which should be some consolation to students.

Now I teach attorneys about TBI and PTSD, prescribe in the ICU of a children's hospital, write on orgasm and meditation for Scientific American, teach neuroanatomy to school psychologists, and run a neuropsychology post-doc program in Nola post hurricane Katrina ... and get an award. I feel like the Bad News Bears of GSAPP – Still funny looking but I won the pennant!!!!

GSAPP recruits faculty and students who are brilliant, compassionate, and devoted to restoring dignity and health to the mentally ill. I am proud to be an alumna. Comps was the best preparation for forensic work I could have had. And several faculty members remain life long mentors. This award is also healing. Spending so much time behind the woodshed at GSAPP was difficult. Now I want to hold my plaque and give the Sally Field speech, ("You like me! You like me!")

As an outlier, perhaps I was destined to brush against the rules and limits, but if I could offer a challenge, it would be to ask that you gently tilt the *hermeneutic of suspicion* toward a *hermeneutic of curiosity*, tempered by reason and compassion. I was advised by GSAPP graduates to be “wallpaper” and stay still so the “Eye of Mordor” would pass over me. The hermeneutic of suspicion means hiding vulnerabilities is wise, but it also means that students may not take full advantage of the richness of this setting.

At its’ best, GSAPP is an incubator -- allowing students to be fallible and to explore with the support and guidance of faculty – even to constructively flail in the service of worthy causes. The alternative would be to teach them to “play it small,” which is hard to unlearn. The reason I advise the President of the APA is because he can count on me to tell him what I think he needs to know and share an unusual perspective. He needs my willingness to sacrifice looking good in favor of larger goals. That is my love offering to the profession, and this is my love offering to GSAPP. I want applied psychology, GSAPP, and it’s graduates to, as Ezra Pound put it, to “dare to shake the grass” and remain the vanguard. I don’t know an organization more worthy or better placed to do so.

As a prescribing psychologist, I hope that one of the projects you will champion is prescriptive authority for psychologists – in part because of the close relationship with the medical school. While there will be some initial tension, it is temporary. 20 years ago, the Medical Director of Children’s Hospital testified against prescriptive authority in Louisiana. Just over a decade later, I joined a hospital with three prescribing psychologists and the hospital paid for my training. We were given full Medical Staff privileges, including the possibility of serving as President of the Medical Staff. I wore the white coat and wrote script in the ICU at the request of the physicians. In 1983 psychiatry stopped offering behavioral training as part of a residency because they

were already faced with the impossible task of learning the DSM, interviewing, patient management and all of the medications in only three years.

At the request of the hospital, prescribing psychologists covered the consultation and liaison service because our ability to offer full range of care, from behavioral interventions to medication revisions, and it was much appreciated. The psychologists who opted for other specialties appreciated being able to sit beside one another and review test data and treatment plans.

Whatever tension there may have been between medicine and psychology became a deeper partnership. We taught residents and gave grand rounds on psychopharmacology in GI and Neurology. They included our post-docs when rounding. In New Jersey, you have a bill travelling through the legislature, one of the three programs that offers the postdoctoral MS in psychopharmacology, an applied psychology program that has been one of the great innovators, and a shared campus with the medical school. I hope GSAPP will be able to make use of this alchemy.