



STEPP PROGRAM

Fall 2015 Newsletter

SUPPORTING TRANSITION AND EDUCATION THROUGH PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP



photo by Jay Clark

It's a great time to be at ECU! We began this fall by welcoming 14 fantastic new Pirates to ECU and kicking off what promises to be an exciting new year with all of our students. Our STEPP family continues to grow, and as new students and friends join our team, we also celebrate the accomplishments of our alumni. Check out some highlights from the year so far in this newsletter, along with updates from some of our grads.

STEPP Program Highlights

New Interview Format for Prospective Students a Success

This summer we piloted a new model for interviewing applicants to the STEPP Program and were pleased with the results. If you have participated in STEPP previously, you may remember that historically we have conducted interviews individually with students throughout the summer. This summer we piloted an "Interview Day" format that proved to be a positive change. On each of five

Interview Days in June and July up to eight families visited the STEPP Program as a group. After hearing an overview of the program, students flowed through a series of campus tours, connections with mentors and current students, and individual interviews with each staff member. We particularly liked the way in which this new model enabled all the applicants to interview with each staff member. Not only was this a more efficient way to connect with prospective students, but early feedback from participants and staff indicate that it may more effectively help us to learn about our candidates and for them to learn about us. We plan to continue to build on the Interview Day model this summer.

Oak Foundation Support

Please join us in a huge thank you to the Oak Foundation for an incredibly generous five-year grant for continued support of the STEPP Program. We are so thankful for the support the Oak Foundation has provided to us and for the widespread extraordinary work they do on behalf of students around the world. You may enjoy learning that the Learning Differences Programme of the Oak Foundation supports a wide range of initiatives focused on creating educational environments where individuals with many different learning profiles can thrive. Some examples of projects that are able to make a positive difference for students as a direct result of the Oak Foundation's support include: Eye to Eye, NCLD, College Advising Corps, understood.org, Learning Ally - just to name a few. We are honored to continue to partner with the Oak Foundation in this important work, and you can learn more about their mission and accomplishments at <http://www.oakfnd.org/>.



photo by Jay Clark

College STAR Student Blog

The College STAR student blog kicked off the academic year under new leadership. During the spring semester, Logan Darr and Patrick Young worked with Marell Cook (who originally envisioned and began the student blog) to assume co-leadership roles. After spending the summer developing a vision for the next phase of the blog, Logan and Patrick hit the ground running this fall. Keep an eye on the blog this year (<http://students.collegestar.org/>) for a new look and a new feature – podcasts! Marell, we think you will be proud of what is coming!

Podcast Recording Dates:

- December 2015: Topic – Disclosing about learning differences with peers and teachers
- February 2016: Topic – Assistive Technology
- April 2016: Topic – Emphasizing your Strengths



Analogies

We are often reminded that students in STEPP represent a group of bright and creative thinkers who offer powerful insights that can be beneficial for so many others! For example, from time to time students mention analogies or illustrations that they have developed or that their parents shared with them at a young age. These images helped them understand not only the challenges that would be associated with having a learning disability and it also empowered them to feel confident that they could meet their goals.

We are working this year to collect some of these analogies, connect them with images or illustrations, and share them with young students, their parents, and their teachers in hopes that they can become useful parts of conversations about teaching, learning, and self-advocacy. Sam Law provided the analogy below, with a photo submitted by Virginia Payne. Both Sam and Virginia are students at ECU.



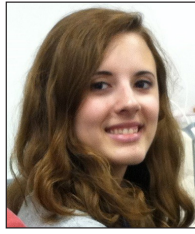
photo by Virginia Payne

"I think of the way I learn as if it's a road trip on North Carolina's highways. I live in Charlotte, and travel to Greenville for school. The most known, quickest, and most frequently traveled route is to take major highways: 85 towards 40, then to 64/264. It's the straight route, and what you will get as the first option from your GPS. But, you can also take HWY 49 up to 64, and then hit 264 on into Greenville. It takes almost an hour longer to go that way. It's a much prettier drive. Much of the way you'll be on a two-lane road, and not many people take that route.

That's kind of what I think of when I think about how I learn. People who take 85 are your typical learners - just moving along getting from point A to B on the fastest route possible. Your students with learning disabilities are the ones who like to take that HWY 49 route. It takes a little bit longer, but at the end of the day you'll end up in the same place. I may take a different route, need a little different scenery, take a couple different turns, but I'll still end up in Greenville.

It also sort of relates to my processing speed. The highway I choose is a shorter distance, but it takes a little bit longer to reach my destination. There are not as many cars on my road, but the more often-traveled route is bumper to bumper. Everybody's on it. Everybody's taking it. I take a different approach to arriving in the same place."

Student Spotlight – Becca O’Hea



In her own quiet and steady way, Becca O’Hea began making a positive difference for ECU and for the STEPP Program the moment she arrived in Greenville. Becca came to Pirate Nation from Dover, Delaware, and we are glad she made the journey! Becca is a 4th year student majoring in psychology. Early in her freshman year it was clear that Becca was someone who was ready to make the most of her time at ECU and the learning experiences ahead. During that year she joined the Eye to Eye team, and for the past two years she has served as co-leader for the ECU chapter of this mentoring program. Becca is always one of the first to step forward to lend a hand or share her voice when help is needed. From speaking to prospective teachers in the College of Education about ideas for teaching students with learning differences, to working as a peer tutor, to supporting faculty and staff in the Psychology department, Becca brings a commitment to excellence to all she touches. Most recently she served on a panel for the Oak Foundation fall board meeting where she had the opportunity to share insights about how to most effectively bring student voices into conversations about issues like teaching and learning, program improvement, and advocacy. Thank you Becca for your strong spirit and your servant heart.

AlumNotes

If you are an alumna/us of ECU and the STEPP Program, we’d love to hear from you. Check out these updates from some of our grads. Noah Poe works as a Geospatial Engineer with the United States Army and is stationed at Fort Richardson in Anchorage, AK. Noah, Mary, and David recently welcomed the newest addition to their family, Daniel, this past summer. Chelsea Guild enjoying her work with UBS Investment Bank, and living in Chapel Hill, NC. Lee Olson lives in Wilmington, NC where she works with the Guardian ad Litem program. Chelsea Murray graduated in December 2014 with a Master of Library Science Degree from ECU. She has settled in New Bern where she enjoys living close to her family and works with a medical office. Logan Jones is now in her second year of teaching with Randolph County Schools. She continues to enjoy teaching and living in the Greensboro area. Andy Gares continues his work in the hospitality field in beautiful Nantucket, MA. Hannah Jessup works with the ECU division of Student Affairs right here in Pirate Nation. She has also generously served on the STEPP Advisory Board for the past two years. Sami Crawford and her son Noah have settled in Atlanta where she enjoys living closer to her

family. Peter Larson is engaged to Hillary Rosen and has settled in Winter Garden, FL. He and Hillary are planning an April wedding at Disney’s Grand Floridian Resort. Peter works at Disney’s Lake Buena Vista Golf Course. Kelly Anastasi graduated from ECU in May and has recently settled in Carrollton, VA. After graduating summa cum laude in May, Marell Cook was married to Austin Paullins in October 2015. She is currently working at Central Piedmont Community College and has begun writing a novel – one that we hope is the first of many. Savanna McMahan Benbow graduated cum laude in fall, 2014 and is now following through on her passion for working with young children as a lead teacher in an early childhood education center. She and Clint were married this fall and have settled in Troutman, NC. Anna Musselwhite Owen has opened a Monkees clothing store in Fayetteville, and she and Will are expecting their first child in July. Daniel McClure is staying close to Greenville, enjoying living in Eastern NC. Currently he is managing an ice cream and coffee shop in Windsor. After graduating magna cum laude last spring, Courtney Dupree is enjoying working for TEKsystems as a recruiter doing internal sales. She and Al Dickens will be married in August and are living in Raleigh, NC. Stephanie McKirdy lives in Charlotte and began working with RE/MAX Executive Realty in January. She is enjoying her work and this phase in her life. Aaron Ferrell is working at Conbraco Industries and getting accustomed to being in the “real world”. Amanda Donelan is in her second year of teaching in Dale City, VA. She loves her role in her second grade classroom.

We continue to wish all of our graduates the very best, and we enjoy hearing from you. Keep in touch! Alumni, be in touch with any of us in the STEPP office with ideas and suggestions for ways we can remain connected.

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