



# STEPP PROGRAM

Spring 2021 Newsletter SUPPORTING TRANSITION AND EDUCATION THROUGH PLANNING AND PARTNERSHIP

“Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice, and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.” During a time of tremendous adversity, this quote from Pele embodies the hard work and dedication STEPP scholars have shown throughout this academic year. Our students continuously exceed expectations, make no excuses, and thrive in situations that demand just a little bit extra! The STEPP Team is so proud of our students, and every day celebrate their individual and group accomplishments.

## STEPP Program Highlights

### STAFF SPOTLIGHTS – Alysha Gray, Adam Denney, and Alyssa Patterson



**Alysha Gray, Instructional Specialist/Academic Advisor**

April 30th, 2021 was the last official day for our Instructional Specialist/Academic Advisor, Ms. Alysha Gray. Ms. Gray has accepted a position with Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. Ms. Gray served as a mentor for the program for three years, a memory that mirrors her favorite quote by Lao Tzu, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” Gray’s journey brought her back to STEPP in 2018 to serve in her current role. While discussing her fondest memories of the program, she mentioned, “ In my new position, I will miss our students’ stories, smiles, jokes, lightbulb moments, thoughtful questions, and curiosity, but most of all, I’ll miss my STEPP family. Please be sure to stay connected and keep in touch!”

Our words, inevitably, lack the depth to truly recognize the impact she has made on the STEPP Program and the students she served! On behalf of everyone involved with the STEPP Program, we wish her well in her continued journey!

*During the time of transition, Adam Denney will assume advising support for students in the program.*



**Alyssa Patterson, Administrative Support Specialist and Grant Manager for STEPP**

Mrs. Patterson joined the STEPP team this fall as our Administrative Associate and Grant Manager. She keeps us organized, manages our budgets, coordinates purchasing, maintains our inventory, and more. She is an ECU alumnus, and we feel fortunate to welcome her to the STEPP program. When considering her role with STEPP, she mentioned, “What interested me in working with the STEPP

Program was learning that we not only strive to ensure academic success for our students, but we are also passionate about empowering them to be leaders in our community.”

For the past twelve years, in various capacities, Mr. Denney has dedicated his professional efforts to enhancing and advocating for varying student populations with their social, emotional, professional, and educational needs in Eastern Carolina. During those twelve years, he has spent six years employed with East Carolina University, driving student success through collaboration with students, university staff, and faculty. Additionally, he obtained his BS in Special Education and an MS in Counselor Education from ECU. He and his wife have recently welcomed their second child, Josephine Grace, and are excited to be a part of such a tremendous program!



**Adam Denney, Senior Associate Director for STEPP**

## NEW YEAR, NEW WEBSITE!

STEPP has recently completed an overhaul of our website to align with the university transition into a new website platform, WordPress. The newly renovated website allows for ease of access to potential students, families, friends, and university constituents. It also allows the program to seamlessly streamline changes to the site, ensuring that our partners are up to date with STEPP! Check out the website at [stepp.ecu.edu](http://stepp.ecu.edu)!

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## Student Highlight

### LYDIA PINTO, WINNER OF MISS EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY 2020/2021

Lydia Pinto, a sophomore at East Carolina University majoring in Recreational Therapy and minoring in Psychology, virtually competed in the Miss East Carolina University Pageant in September of 2020. As a member of the 2019 STEPP cohort, Lydia focused on advocating for all people with differing abilities. Lydia mentioned, "When I competed, I was working towards a platform to advocate for people like me, and my friends, peers, and people in my community."

Lydia wants to make a difference serving East Carolina's Campus and leave a long-lasting example of love and kindness, honoring what ECU is all about! When COVID-19 hit, students were able to stay involved and compete online. Pinto said, "Yes, it was hard and came with a ton of challenges, but it was ALL WORTH IT!" Lydia has been heavily involved in volunteering in the community, and is honored to have a leadership role through which to spread awareness of her platform. Please join STEPP in congratulating Lydia!



## Spring Graduates



**ALEXANDER BALL:** (2014 cohort)

**Hometown:** Greenville, NC

**Major:** Engineering

**Next STEPPs:** After graduation, I will be attending CU Denver for graduate school to pursue a Master's in Chemistry with a concentration in synthesis and measurement.

*"STEPP was extremely important when I first came to college and gave me a stepping-stone that allowed me to be able to do well in college. If it was not for STEPP and my advisor at the time, I possibly would not have pursued a degree in science and would not be where I am today."*



**CARL "MICKEY" ELLINGTON:** (2016 cohort)

**Hometown:** Charlotte, NC

**Major:** Health Fitness Specialist



**JONATHAN RUSSO:** (2017 cohort)

**Hometown:** Cramerton, NC

**Major:** Biology

**Next STEPPs:** After graduation, I will be working as a kayak guide until I attend Creighton School of Dentistry in the fall.

*"My time at ECU has been wonderful. Some things I will miss are working with the STEPP staff as well as visiting friends in the cove. STEPP has been important to me because it has shaped me to become who I am today in addition to getting me prepared for my next adventure."*



**ANDERSEN WARD:** (2016 cohort)

**Hometown:** Chapel Hill, NC

**Major:** Construction Management

### Need to contact STEPP?

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**Be sure to follow STEPP on our social media platforms to stay up to date on all our events and announcements.**



If you would like more information regarding endowments for scholarships, contributions to original endowment, and other contributions you can make to the STEPP Program, please contact ECU's Senior Advancement Officer, Melissa Adamson at [adamsonm17@ecu.edu](mailto:adamsonm17@ecu.edu).