

# **UMSAEP UM-UWC Linkage Report**

## **Visit to St Louis, Missouri**

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### **UMSL Host:**

Prof. Steven Bruce

Director: Centre for Trauma and Recovery, UMSL

## **1. Overview**

Thank you to the UMSAEP Linkage programme for my first visit to the University of Missouri, St Louis. The purpose of the visit was to foster research collaboration with Prof. Steven Bruce at the UMSL Centre for Trauma and Recovery. I visited St Louis for a period of two weeks from 31 March – 16 April 2017. This report provides information regarding the objectives of the visit and the extent to which these objectives are being achieved. In addition, the alignment of the objectives to UWC priority areas is discussed.

## **2. Proposed Objectives**

The primary objectives were to foster international research collaboration in the area of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Through discussion with Prof. Bruce and his research team, the following three research projects are to be undertaken collaboratively and involve multi-site data collection and analysis:

### **Short term projects (2017 – 2018):**

Two short term projects were identified and these include

- **Project 1:**  
Investigating the motivational orientation of undergraduate students' and its relationship to lecture attendance/non-attendance
- **Project 2:**  
Investigating trauma, PTSD and health related concerns among the student population

### **Long term projects (2018 – 2020):**

Longer term projects include:

- **Project 3**

## Investigating the neural correlates of PTSD treatment

### **3. Status of Proposed Objectives**

#### **Project 1:**

Investigating the motivational orientation of undergraduate students' and its relationship to lecture attendance/non-attendance.

I have generated a research proposal for this project in the first semester. It was submitted to CHSHD and HSSREC and ethical approval has been granted. Data collection for the project (UWC) will commence in the second semester.

#### **Project 2:**

Investigating trauma, PTSD and health related concerns among the student population

An MA Research Psychology student under my supervision is undertaking a project in this area and has received ethical clearance for the study and will be commencing with data collection (UWC) in the second semester.

Prof. Bruce has indicated that data collection at UMSL will commence in early 2018.

#### **Project 3:**

This project is situated within a broader study involving implementing evidence-based practice (EBP) into a clinical psychology training curriculum. I submitted a research proposal to the National Research Foundation (NRF) in May 2017 for this study and included Prof. Bruce as a collaborator. The broad aim of the study is to bridge the evidence-to-practice gap by implementing evidence-based practice (EBP) into the curriculum of a Clinical Psychology training programme at the University of the Western Cape. Participants in the project will be training directors, clinical training staff and students-in-training in Clinical Psychology programmes nationally (South Africa). There will be four phases to the project. Phase I involves assessing the current status of EBP in the curricula of accredited training programmes in South Africa. Phase II entails assessing the extent to which training departments are receptive towards adopting EBP in the curricula. Information from these

latter phases will aid in the identification of potential barriers to incorporating EBP and guide the implementation effort. Phase III involves incorporating EBP into the curriculum of the Clinical Psychology Programme at the University of the Western Cape. This involves training clinical psychology students in an evidence-based treatment model for PTSD and evaluating the training effort. It also entails developing a dedicated trauma clinic that will serve to enhance university-community links in the area of traumatic stress services. The collaborative project involving investigating the neural correlates of PTSD treatment outcome is linked to the development of this clinic. Prof. Bruce will be assisting with the training of students as part of this project. The final phase of the project entails an evaluation of the impact of the implementation effort on the training programme and its sustainability.

### **Overall assessment of the value of the UM/UWC Exchange program**

The UM/UWC exchange programme was of significant value in developing an international research collaboration. This type of networking and collaboration is extremely important in developing expertise and sharing information on new approaches. In addition, the collaborative research projects are innovative. Project 3, for example, will be the first South African study to investigate and identify neural correlates of psychological treatment outcome among local populations with PTSD. The second innovation in the proposed study is that identified changes in brain activity as a result of treatment would provide substantial impetus for promoting the use of evidence-based psychological interventions (EBPI's) for PTSD in local contexts. Currently, EBPI's are under-utilised in South Africa owing to concerns regarding transportability (i.e. the extent to which treatments developed in Western clinical contexts are applicable cross-culturally). This has significant public health implications in that vulnerable populations may not have access to the best available treatment. Thirdly, the study would have important implications for the development and refinement of existing treatments for PTSD.

### **Impact your research visit will have on strengthening and improving programs at UWC.**

The proposed project aligns with the current UWC and CHS Faculty drive towards the formation of an Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Centre. The development of this centre is still in the conceptualisation phase and the proposed project may provide additional support and impetus for its development. The proposed project would also serve to further promote increased research intensiveness and the development of innovative research areas within the Faculty and university.