

Chairman's Synopsis for 2010-2011 Resident Applicants

Few professional decisions, if any, pose such a challenge as choosing the right residency program for this next stage of your career. To a large extent, there is no right program. It is more a matter of balance and compatibility in selecting the residency program that is most attuned to your professional aspirations, your professional attributions and, most importantly, one's personal circumstances. As you review this program and contemplate your choice, I hope you will be excited by the potential which a career in psychiatry offers. I hope that you will be excited and also impressed by the strength and balance of our residency program. Our department is in a growth phase with a positive momentum and clear success during the last five academic years. Please take a moment to review our [department highlights for the Academic year 2009-2010](#) to learn about our activities. We have nationally renowned faculty and we are national leaders in education and in schizophrenia research.

It is indeed a great time to pursue a career in psychiatry. It is timely because of the growing recognition of the importance of mental disorders and because of the prodigious advances in our ability to treat these conditions. According to the World Health Organization, four out of the ten leading causes of disability worldwide are mental disorders. Moreover, mental illness often goes undetected and untreated. As this academic year begins, we are at a new threshold with real legislative support and the nation's commitment to mental health parity. Our department is committed, through its own research and through its collaborations with other departments nationally, to enhancing the scientific understanding and treatment of psychiatric disorders.

This national attention to mental health services coincides with an unprecedented period of growth in knowledge and in the application of neuroscience to mental health. Our department's strategic repositioning as a partner in the MCG Brain Discovery Institute - recently launched by our Dean, is consistent with this national direction in our field. We are also witnessing dramatic changes in the delivery of mental health care with the emergence of more comprehensive models of care which promote (integrated) health wellness as opposed to the historical dichotomy of mental and physical health. Such change is timely and accords well with the availability of more efficacious somatic and psychosocial treatments. There is also greater professional and public appreciation of the need for early intervention and preventative strategies to avert the long term consequences of mental disability. This approach is enhanced by broader political efforts to de-stigmatize mental illness and to provide a clearer understanding and appreciation that many mental disorders are often (although not inevitably) biologically-based brain disorders for which our current treatments are as effective as the established treatments for many other medical conditions. Thus, our field is advancing at a rapid pace and it is an exciting time to pursue a career in psychiatry. As you read on about our program and as you visit with our departmental members, I am confident that you, too, will experience our excitement at what lies ahead of us and our delight in the pursuit of our tripartite mission of clinical excellence, scholarly research and dedicated teaching/mentorship.

Tradition is an important part of destiny and our department, from its inception right up to today, has distinguished itself nationally. The founding chairman, Dr. Hervey Cleckley, made seminal contributions to psychotherapy and co-authored *The Three Faces of Eve*, one of the most influential texts on psychotherapy. This commitment to psychological understanding and to

therapeutic alliance continues to the present time and is fused with emergent biological approaches so that today our faculty are at the cutting edge of their areas of interest in the neuroscience of psychiatry. Examples include our work in schizophrenia and depression. We offer cutting edge treatments (some still under FDA review) for persons with schizophrenia. We have recently become (in partnership with our [Department of Pathology](#)) a national center for pharmacogenomic testing of cytochrome P450 polymorphisms that could help determine treatment response and tolerability to many antidepressant and also some antipsychotic medications. We are also leading Georgia in partnership with Georgia's Division of Mental Health in nationally known efforts at peer support psychological services and recovery for persons with mental illness. Our trainees are acquiring this cutting edge experience in the recovery model and this program, Project GREAT (Georgia Recovery-Based Educational Approach to Treatment) is attracting attention nationally. This is a unique program and a real opportunity for residents in their training. Collectively, these illustrate our commitment to being at the cutting edge in clinical therapeutics and service delivery. You will also find this commitment to broad intellectual curiosity and balanced education throughout the department. We have also committed new resources and faculty to our educational programs. [Adriana Foster, MD](#), received the MCG Outstanding Junior faculty award. Dr. Foster has taken on the role of Clerkship Director for Medical Student Education. Her work also has promoted residents' improvement in medical student teaching and has been extremely well received. You will find these characteristics of educational prowess, skills, and encouragement in our faculty and in our current residents. Also, ours is a program that is attentive to the individual circumstances and needs of our residents. Ask our current residents, they will give you a fair appraisal and they are as eager as we are to assist you in choosing the program that is most congruent with your needs. I believe you will also be impressed at the integral role our residents, such as our most recent past Chief Resident and now Assistant Professor, [Dr. Brian Miller](#), play in the life and direction of our department.

We also are very proud that our department and residency programs have a culture that is truly friendly and supportive of each other. We enjoy good friendships, social gatherings (we begin the new academic year as we mean to continue . . . we party!), and the pursuit of personal development alongside professional accomplishment. The size of our department, the southern culture, and the informal lifestyle of Augusta are all conducive to making our residency a friendly and fun place to work and play. Ask our current residents . . . I am confident they will tell you that this is a fun place to train!

Of course, these hard economic times are challenging for academics. Knowing the state of and the stability of a department is another important consideration when choosing a residency program - is the program in growth or in decline? Is new faculty joining? Are there new initiatives? Is the department reaching national excellence? The answers are all overwhelmingly positive for our department. We are growing. We are adding new programs and developing new initiatives. We are now the inpatient leader in clinical services and we are continuing to add faculty members in child and adolescent psychiatry, general, and forensic psychiatry. Several of our faculty received national recognitions this last year. [Dr. Sandra Sexson](#) is a national leader in education. Among other national child and adolescent and educational boards, Dr. Sexson is on the APA (APIRE) Board of Trustees. Dr. Sexson is also a senior examiner for the ABPN - several other of our faculty ([Drs. Donna Londino](#), [Stewart Shevitz](#), and [Peter Buckley](#)) are

examiners for the Psychiatry Boards. Our department has three major federal grants (PI: Dr. Peter Buckley) focusing on schizophrenia. Dr. Buckley is editor of a major new schizophrenia journal and a leader in psychiatry administration. He is on the Board of Trustees of APA/APIRE and is immediate past president of the [American Association of Chairs of Departments of Psychiatry](#). We are one of nineteen departments nationally to receive a first ever three-year federal award to support our psychology residency program. Our psychiatry residency program was designated as a member of the 100% club, one of the first ten programs in the country successful in having 100% of trainees as members of the [American Psychiatric Association](#). You will need to read in [Dr. Shevitz's letter](#) our recent successes in our residency - successful recruiting for the 9th consecutive year), improved curriculum, curriculum initiatives with our residents, more resident attendees at national and regional meeting, high resident morale . . . and other highlights.

In the fall of 2007 we also moved into a new building. Our lovely new home is in the [Stoney Building](#) on the MCG campus. This is a very strong endorsement by our institution of our success.

We are proud of our tradition and we are confident of our future. At a time of institutional and financial instability for many academic departments nationally, our department is growing, is financially stable, and is on the right track. As you review our program and contemplate your choice, let me take this opportunity to highlight some additional attributes of this program at the Medical College of Georgia:

- Our department is in a growth phase, with a clear direction. It has also had major successes in the past nine years. This makes it an exciting time to join us.
- Our department and our complement of dedicated faculty is large and diverse enough to provide the breadth of educational experience that is necessary while we still have a size to be personable and interested in the career and lives of our residents. This balance is a particularly attractive aspect of our program.
- Augusta's mental health system is well organized and is delivered through many sites which are, because of the size of our city, readily accessible.
- The program utilizes these collaborating sites for residency training. These close connections provide residents with diverse learning opportunities without the logistical and driving burdens experienced by programs in large cities.
- Following consultation from a national leader in residency curriculum development, we are revising our residency curriculum so that it is progressive and now to promote evidence-based mental health learning, more focus on neuroscience and on mental health recovery and advocacy.
- We are one of the largest medical schools in the nation with 190 students in each class on the MCG campus and an additional 40 at our Athens campus. Opportunities for teaching and medical student interaction abound.
- Our success is now reflected in our institution's allocation of an elegant, historical building for our department. This has been a wonderful opportunity for our department.

- This is the oldest continuously operating medical school in the south and is a state institution, thereby conferring stability of presence and continued funding. This often is an important consideration.
- Augusta is a wonderful city to live in, to raise a family in and to experience the famous southern hospitality and charm. Please check out the web site links on Augusta - <http://www.mcg.edu/cityaugusta.htm>
- Augusta is a highly affordable city with excellent, budget-friendly housing, great public and private schools, and inexpensive dining out. Based upon national ratings, we compare very favorably with other southern and national cities.

We wish you every success in your quest for the right program for you.

We are confident that as you consider our program, you will find educational excellence, academic prowess, and friendship among colleagues. We are delighted that you are considering our program and we will be very pleased to provide you with any information to assist you in your choice.

Welcome . . . look . . . learn . . . and enjoy!