

## Summer Research Evaluation

This summer, I worked with Dr. Nicole Noffsinger-Frazier of the Psychology Department at Sewanee to begin designing a re-vamped eating disorder prevention program. For the past two years, I have worked with Dr. Noffsinger-Frazier in implementing the Body Project, a cognitive dissonance-based eating disorder prevention program, with freshmen women here at the University of the South. This program focuses on media literacy (i.e., educating young women on how unrealistic the media's portrayal of women is) as a means of identifying the negative effects the "thin ideal" has on women. By establishing the impossibility of attaining the thin ideal, the program encourages body acceptance; this, in turn, has been shown to decrease body dissatisfaction, which is one of the foremost risk factors for later onset of eating disorders.

During the first year of its implementation at Sewanee, I served as a peer facilitator for the Body Project. This entailed leading the scripted, structured discussion with a group of six to ten freshmen women. Because this was the pilot run of the program, only freshmen women who were pledging in the three biggest sororities on campus participated in the Project. This past year in its second cycle, the Body Project was disseminated to all of the freshmen women who chose to rush during the Spring semester. Instead of peer facilitating this time, Dr. Noffsinger-Frazier asked me to run the program. This entailed interviewing and selecting and training thirty peer facilitators to lead the small groups, meeting with all sorority presidents to ensure their pledges' participation and being present at each session to answer any questions or concerns that arose during discussions.

I have been involved in the Body Project since it came to Sewanee; this year, I decided that I wanted to contribute to the campus as a whole and the Project specifically in a new way. After follow-up discussions with the peer facilitators about what they felt the Project was lacking, Dr. Noffsinger-Frazier and I decided to re-write the curriculum of the Body Project. The new title is the Sewanee Embodiment Project, and we have endeavored to make the curriculum apply more to Sewanee specifically. Instead of addressing only the media and its interaction with body image and eating disorders, we have begun to build a curriculum that addresses other issues women face on Sewanee's campus. Some of these issues include Sewanee's infamous drinking culture and hook-up culture and the pressure to be fit and healthy at Sewanee; we also address other, more universal issues that women face in our culture as a whole, such as body objectification (of others as well as oneself) and a general lack in connection between oneself and one's body common to women everywhere, particularly in Western society.

This summer, Dr. Noffsinger-Frazier and I spent most of our time researching other comparable programs that already address the issues we are seeking to address. We found that there is not a program in publication right now as encompassing as we envision ours to be. In our research, we did find an outline for a similar type of program that has never been written as a manual or implemented. Our efforts this summer have resulted in a concrete plan for an independent study in the Advent 2013 semester during which we will create a full, scripted curriculum based on the outline found in our research that we will implement with all Greek freshmen women in the Easter 2014 semester.

This summer, we were able to lay the groundwork for this Project. We will be able to hit the ground running in the fall with a clear sense of what we are doing and what we will need to accomplish by the end of the semester. Without having had the opportunity to do research this semester, I believe it would be impossible to complete the project in time to implement it at the beginning of the Easter 2014 semester. Therefore, this summer research has been very productive in a looking-ahead sense. In a more immediate sense, I have never had to do exhaustive research to determine whether an idea had already been presented in the academic world. Dr. Noffsinger-Frazier was integral in helping me understand how to even begin this type of research. This skill set will be invaluable to me as I pursue a Master's degree after leaving Sewanee.

In terms of my career goals, this internship has reiterated for me that, while I do enjoy research to an extent, I am much more fulfilled when I am working one-on-one with individual women. Knowing that this completed program will help young women has been a huge impetus for me to work on it; however, I now know that I gain more satisfaction from a single, personal relationship than from potentially, but without certainty, helping many women I will likely never meet. For the past two years, I have received funding from Sewanee to help me figure out what I want to spend my life doing; both of my interning experiences have been invaluable, not because I did something that I want to make my career, but because they have shown me what I definitely do *not* want to make my career. I believe this has been just as important to my future success.