

Laura Vogt:

Hello, I'm excited to have you joining us for the (Not So) Secret Guide to Being a Berkeley Engineer. I'm your host Laura Vogt and I'm the Associate Director of Marketing and Communications in the College of Engineering. Did you know that mental health of our engineering students is so important to our faculty and staff, that we now have three psychologists on staff to help support you? so with a lot of excitement, I'm excited to introduce you to our three guests from Counseling and Psychological Services, Dr. Christine Zhou, Dr. Yi Du and Dr. Geneé Jackson. They are all senior staff, psychologists, and also our College of Engineering, Counseling Satellite Office Counselors. Hello!

Yi Du:

Hello.

Geneé Jackson:

Hi.

Christine Zhou:

Hello.

Laura Vogt:

So I feel that oftentimes students seeking support from counselors can feel awkward, because they don't know the counselor personally. And so our goal today with this podcast, the first in a series with our counselors, is to get to know them better, their motivations and their history in practicing psychology and supporting their students. And later podcasts, we're going to focus more on some common questions that you might have and expect to see a call out in the ESS newsletter, asking for your input.

Laura Vogt:

So the mental health of students in the college of engineering and has been important for some time, Christine, I know you opened the satellite office with us a few years ago, can you give us some more of the history and how you think having a satellite office has opened some doors?

Christine Zhou:

So hi everybody, my name is Christine Zhou. I'm the Staff Psychologist from Counseling and Psychological Services. And so the opening of the counseling satellite office in Engineering was a collaborative effort, between College Engineering and Counseling and Psychological Services here on campus. The main purpose of opening the satellite office on the North side of campus, is to increase access to services for students in engineering and lower the threshold for help seeking.

Christine Zhou:

The idea is, that counselor will be closer to where students study and hang out instead of being a centralized setting. It also provides opportunities for ongoing collaboration and consultation

with faculty and staff in a college, in order to provide better support when it comes to mental wellness for students. Since the opening of the office in 2012, there has been a steady increase of utilization of services and more appreciation for the importance of mental wellbeing, for students in engineering.

Christine Zhou:

Therefore in fall of 2020, we're so excited to announce the expanding of the counseling satellite office, by having two additional staff psychologists, Dr. Geneé Jackson and Dr. Yi Du. Dr. Jackson will be primary focusing on working with undergraduate students, while Dr. Du will dedicate majority of her time to provide services to graduate students.

Laura Vogt:

Well, thank you so much and I'm so excited that we've added these extra roles and I know it's really going to benefit our students. So Christine, since you've been with Engineering Student Services the longest and you've been on the podcast before, let's start with your introduction. Can you tell us a little bit more about what got you interested in practicing psychology?

Christine Zhou:

Sure. You know, psychology wasn't a field when I grew up in China. So I came to the United States from China, this is about 20 years ago. However, I got intrigued by the movie Good Will Hunting, as an undergraduate student in China and that was my first exposure to clinical practicing psychology. I actually didn't get the opportunity to study anything related to psychology, until I started my PhD program in Counseling Psychology at University of Minnesota. I chose the field because I'm interested in meeting and learning about different people, to hear their stories and appreciate the challenges and struggles many of us have to go through in order to pursue our dreams in life.

Laura Vogt:

Geneé please tell us what got you interested in practicing psychology.

Geneé Jackson:

Well like Christine, I grew up with no idea whatsoever what a psychologist was or what they did. It wasn't part of my cultural experience at all. If you had a problem, you spoke to your family, you talked about it maybe at church, or you didn't talk about it at all. But as an undergrad, I did enjoy studying psychology, but I actually didn't make a decision to pursue graduate training until much later, when I got a job working for a community mental health consortium in San Francisco and they were the first community mental health center. They were all over the country, but this was the first one to develop and deliver culturally sensitive services to ethnically diverse populations. And at that time, their catchment area covered Chinatown, Western Edition, Japantown. The Western Edition was a primarily black community in San Francisco and as Bayview was.

Geneé Jackson:

And so I worked for them actually as a graphic artist, but they were a group of African American psychologists and they were doing what we would call community psychology now. And what we also would refer to as social justice work. They were making history and they were changing the laws in the state of California, as an example on the use of culturally bias testing in the schools. And those tests were standardized tests, but they were being used to place black children in classrooms for developmentally disabled kids and they were not accurate. They were culturally biased and so this group of psychologists took them to court and they won.

Geneé Jackson:

And it's a landmark case, it's called the Larry P. Case if anybody wants to look it up. But I was part of that, indirectly and I was so impressed with the social change work they were able to do and the kinds of impact, that they were having on large communities of color and it made me want to become a psychologist as well, so they became my mentors.

Laura Vogt:

Oh, I really like the idea that you started off as one thing and found your passion because of that. Because of the job that you had, you were able to find this other passion.

Geneé Jackson:

Yeah, it's true. That's a true story.

Speaker 5:

And Yi, what about you? What got you interested in practicing psychology?

Yi Du:

Yeah. Hi everybody my name's Yi Du, I'm a staff psychologist. So my story is kind of similar to Christine's I think. So I became interested in psychology because of American TV shows, I watched a lot of them when I was in high school and at the time I was a big fan of The X-Files and the main character in that show, studied psychology before becoming an FBI agent. And it sounded really cool and I became interested in the subject and started to learn more about it.

Yi Du:

And then I was really interested, so when I applied to university in China, psychology was a major I applied to. At the time, it wasn't even a popular subject in China at all, so a lot of people were questioning my choices and I just decided to go with it. And then I realized I wasn't learning that much in college and so I decided to apply to universities in the U.S., that was in 2007, 2006, and I was able to get in one. So my life courses changed drastically from that moment, I started studying psychology in the U.S. and eventually went to get my PhD in Counseling Psychology, at Iowa State University.

Laura Vogt:

I really like the idea that pop culture is changing what people want to do and like how you chose your careers. Christine, how do you work with students and how do you see changes happen?

Christine Zhou:

That's a good question. A lot of the student tell me that they wanted to change when they first came to my office. I think I tend to spend a lot of time listening and trying to understand where the student is coming from, what kind of challenges they're facing and most important of all, how the challenges have been affecting them on a daily basis. I believe that being heard, understood and validated is the first step leading to readiness to change.

Laura Vogt:

And Geneé is your approach different than Christine's? How do you work with students?

Geneé Jackson:

No it's not at all different. I agree with Christine it's really important for people to be able, to have a space, to be heard and understood and it helps them, I think get clearer on what it is that's going on and they can get it outside of themselves and bounce it off of someone. What I also do in my work, is I really spend time trying to understand their family, social and cultural context, as a basis for understanding the issues that they're bringing in. And it helps to what kind of approach to take to address what's going on.

Geneé Jackson:

The more I see the more I know about who they are and where they come from, I feel like the answers to the questions people are struggling with are with them, but I facilitate the process of helping them uncover what that is. So I'd like to try to empower my clients, to know that they really do know what they need most better than anyone else. I use a lot of systemic and integrative approaches, because I feel like those are most consistent with working in multicultural populations, which I've done a lot of, so basically that's what I do.

Laura Vogt:

Thank you. Yi, now that we've heard Christine and Geneé's approaches, can you tell us about yours?

Yi Du:

Yeah, I also value the power of relationship and also the power of being heard, understood and validated. I tend to use a emotion focus approach, through our various cultural lenses. I tend to make room for people to sit with their core feelings and many may not be of... Sorry, I'm going to go back.

Yi Du:

Okay. I tend to make room for people to sit with their core feelings. Many of the feelings may not be often welcomed or allowed in our daily life, because of our culture, because of our values or our background, family, upbringing and all the past experiences. So I try to stay curious with my students and help them process some difficult emotions. Some of them may not be processed

alone, so it's really important to have a relationship and help the person feel less alone in some difficult feelings.

Yi Du:

I believe these feelings are like messengers with important messages about our unmet needs, so if we don't receive the message, the feeling will linger and get more intense, sometimes can be very overwhelming. So when these feelings are heard and processed, we know what we need to do and we'll try to take care of our needs, or make some changes.

Laura Vogt:

Well thank you, I really liked seeing how all of you have similar approaches, but just a little different of how you might get to know your students. And what made... If any of you want to answer this, or all of you, what made you want to work in higher education? Was there something about working with college students that brought you to UC Berkeley?

Christine Zhou:

I can speak a little bit about that and I think college is such a dynamic period of our lives. This is the first time we're moving away from home and beginning to form our own identity in so many ways. Academically, career-wise, social relationships and culturally, it is the stage in our lives we're started to ask questions such as who I am and who I want to become. There are tons of potentials for growth, change and development, which could impact and shape the path for the rest of our lives. I love working with college students, because despite of all the challenges that they are going through, there's always a sense of optimism and hope for the infinite of possibilities in the years to come and never gets old.

Yi Du:

I would also like to share, I think it's a subconscious decision throughout the years to end up in higher education, because I always go back to the memory when I was in college. Actually there was one time I sought counseling for one session, I was going through a lot of homesickness and a lot of stress, from preparing for GRE at the time. And I didn't know who to talk to, so I signed up for one session only actually, but it was so helpful. To feel like, "Oh wow, someone actually gets it."

Yi Du:

And I didn't really need much support after that actually, it just magically helped me in that moment. And I always think back and think about how even just one brief interaction with a counselor, it had so much impact on my life at that time and I really want to provide that for the people I work with. So yeah, I just want to share my experience when I was a college student here.

Laura Vogt:

Thank you and do any of you think working with students in STEM or specifically Engineering, changes how your overall work is with the students?

Christine Zhou:

I'm always so impressed with engineering students at [Cal 00:00:13:32], because they're so hard working, dedicated, creative, talented and yet extremely humble and kind. I learned a lot from talking to my students. One of the amazing things that I have learned is how to connect with my students, using their own languages. For example, in order to understand burnout, I learned to use the analogy of a computer system shut down.

Christine Zhou:

So I said, "It's like, if you work too much and a computer system is overheated and it has to shut down and so as engineers will have to go and figure out and reset the whole system. And so it's very similar, we work too hard and we don't take care of ourselves and they would burn out. And so it is a way for us to go back and try to figure out how to reset the system." And so that's how I use analogy of counseling to help the students understand how it works.

Geneé Jackson:

[inaudible 00:14:29] add something to this too. One of the things that I've noticed in working with engineering students that I find refreshing, they're problem solvers. They come in and they may not have the language to talk about necessarily what they're feeling or experiencing, but basically once they get like, "Okay, this is what the problem is and this is the approach that will help solve it." They immediately go and make that change and it's amazing to me, because so many people will spend a lot of time talking about changing, but they don't quite get there. But I just find engineering students to be real serious, dedicated "I want to solve this problem." And once they know what the solution is, they make it happen.

Laura Vogt:

Excellent. Geneé, can you tell us more about the campus initiative to support our African American underrepresented students? We talked a little bit about it earlier and you were telling me about how it's grown so much, in this past year.

Geneé Jackson:

Yeah. There were... Just a little bit of background. Over the course of several years, in the past several years, there've been quite a bit of discussions generated by student organizations and it got up to the office of the Chancellor. And so a few years ago, the Chancellor wanted the entire campus to participate in an initiative to basically retain, recruit and support African American students, faculty and staff on the campus.

Geneé Jackson:

So it's really a campus wide, very comprehensive initiative that is in motion and funding was put towards this. One of the demands or requests I should say, by the students was they really wanted to have more mental health services available to the community. And that would mean more staffing as well and that actually happened last year. We now have three African American staff at CAPS, and it's the first time in the history of CAPS that it's ever happened.

Geneé Jackson:

And so we were able to form a team and we're called the African American Mental Health Team. And we're functioning both in terms of obviously doing outreach and programming and planning, but we're writing grants. We've had grants funded to support our work in doing this.

Geneé Jackson:

And we've been able to provide services this year, in number that have never been provided before to the campus community. We just now put those numbers together recently and we were all kind of surprised ourselves, but the team is also functioning in capacity of providing mental health consultation, around policing and even doing hospitalizations with students of color. So we're getting involved, across the campus as well in providing input around issues that impact African American, as well as Brown students and underrepresented students, so that's where it's at.

Laura Vogt:

What's the best way for students, if they want to know more about how to get involved or find those services?

Geneé Jackson:

Well to contact CAPS they can contact either myself, Adisa Anderson who is kind of like the lead of that team, or Jaiza Jones who is on staff at CAPS as well. So any one of us can get them more information and get them connected to services, that are specifically available. It's also on our website, on the CAPS website.

Laura Vogt:

I'll make sure I put a link on that, on our Welcome to Berkeley Engineering-

Geneé Jackson:

Great.

Laura Vogt:

... web page.

Geneé Jackson:

Yeah. That would be good.

Laura Vogt:

Are there any other organizations or initiatives, that any of you are involved in that you want to share?

Yi Du:

Yeah. I want to share about our CAPS Group Program. We have a very well developed group program, we just look at the flyer this morning, getting ready for the fall. We have very many pages of groups that were offering in the fall with workshops, managing stress, anxiety, depression, or support groups for various population and also psychotherapy groups. So these are really valuable resources as students don't have to wait for these services, they can just talk to a counselor and sign up. So I really wanted to advocate for that. Like personally, I run a group for Asian and Asian American women support group, which has been really successful in the past three and a half years. So I want to advocate for that.

Geneé Jackson:

Yeah I'll add, I'm inserting here that there are a number of groups now being offered for the first time, for the BIPOC community, Black Indigenous People of Color for men also for queer black women and I'm co-leading a group, it's called Black Women's Healing Circle. And there's a number of others that you just mentioned, that people should definitely go to the site and see what groups are offered.

Laura Vogt:

I think groups would, are probably a good way to help build that community, that we know everyone's talking about in this remote environment of how to build a community. So let's end with a little bit more personal about each of you. So can you tell me one fun fact about yourself? Christine, you're up first.

Christine Zhou:

All right, so I actually have a Chinese name. My Chinese name is [Shuang Mei 00:00:20:41]. So the character Shuang in my Chinese name means double or a pair. My parents picked the character, because when I was born my dad was also admitted to college after 10 years of cultural revolution. Therefore it's like double happiness in Chinese culture, so actually now I have a pair of twins, a boy and a girl. Guess the double happiness continues.

Laura Vogt:

And twins at home during a pandemic is double the fun. Geneé, what would your fun fact be?

Geneé Jackson:

Well, it made me start thinking about fun memories more so than a fun fact, but one of my most fun memories are when I used to spend a lot of hours rollerblading the mountain side trails. When I lived in Anchorage Alaska, I taught at the university up there and I daydream about that now, because I'm stuck indoors. I can't go outside even today, there's fires going on and you can't even breathe the air. So that that's my fun memory, being up there and just being free and flying through the woods, on a trail on roller blades.

Laura Vogt:

Oh, that sounds like it would be amazing.

Geneé Jackson:

It was, it was.

Laura Vogt:

Yi your turn, what's a fun fact about you?

Yi Du:

Yeah. I love animals, I grew up with animals. So normally the fun fact I share with people, is I have six chinchillas. And I started with two chinchillas and one time when I put them play together an "accident" happened and so I kept all the babies and I've had them for over eight years now. So they're going to stay with me for a long time. And my lifetime goal, which my partner probably will have a... His heart rate probably will increase if I say this, but I would like to have a zoo in my home and that's my lifetime goal, but yeah. Yes.

Laura Vogt:

I can't imagine having a whole zoo, the whole menagerie. Well, thank you all so much for coming on the podcast this week, I really liked getting to know you better and I think our students are really going to appreciate it too.

Yi Du:

Thank you for having us. Thank you.

Geneé Jackson:

Thank you for having us. You're welcome.

Laura Vogt:

And if anyone would like to make an appointment with our counselors, you can find the links and phone numbers on our website at engineering.berkeley.edu/ess. I'll also have the shortcut on our podcast web page as well. And if you have more questions that you would like our counselors to address on a future podcast, let me know. My email address is L Vogt, that's L, V as in Victor, O as in Oscar, G as in goat, T as in Tom, @berkeley.edu and I'll also put that link on our webpage and thank you everyone for tuning in, to the (Not So) Secret Guide to Being a Berkeley Engineer. I'm looking forward to next week when our counselors join us again, to answer some of the most common questions that you, our students have for them. Thank you.