Episode 4

**Ixchel Verdugo:** Welcome to our fourth episode of the University of Oregon College of Education, Look No Feather podcast. I am Ixchel Verdugo, one of the academic advisors in the college of education

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** And I'm Emma Bjorngard Basayne . I'm also one of the academic advisors here in the college of education.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** This episode is the third and final part of the series outlining the undergraduate majors in the college of education and what opportunities are available for students who choose one of our majors. For this episode, we will be focusing on Family and Human Services or FHS. We interviewed Dr. Benedict McWhirter, a professor in counseling psychology. He has assignments working with students in prevention science, teaches master's courses for couples and family therapy, and he has taught in family and human services for many years. Dr. McWhirter is also serving as a chair for the undergraduate council.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** We also talked to Dr. Jean Kjellstrand. So she is an assistant professor in counseling, psychology and human services. And she teaches across departments, both undergraduate students and graduate students. And she also runs the FHS practicum.

Okay. So before we jump into the interview, we wanted to just talk a little bit about the different emphases within the FHS major. So we have the Prevention Science emphasis, or PS, and we have the Direct Service Intensive emphasis or DSI. First, I will talk a little bit about the prevention science emphasis. Um, so you enter the prevention science emphasis as soon as you begin your FHS major experience, this emphasis takes more of a macro approach to family and human services, and it allows students to study the application of research to prevent various conditions and to create foundations. So individuals and families can develop in healthy ways. Uh, and students also learn that research has other applications to policy development and to guide practices and programs. Also within the PS or prevention science, emphasis students get actual research experience working in a lab or with individual professors and we're going to talk a little bit more about that in the outro to this episode. So stay tuned.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** So then, um, you also have the opportunity to enter the direct service intensive emphasis or DSI, um, your junior year. And it's something that you can complete over the course of four terms. So basically this emphasis allows students to study the delivery of preventative interventions, treatments, and recovery support services. So basically students learn about the delivery of treatments and services through hands-on experience, which is something that both professors will be talking about in the interview. And then this is the emphasis for those who want to work directly with individuals, groups, and communities.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** And with that brief overview, let's jump into the interview to get a more in-depth analysis and discussion of the major and the two different emphases.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** So could you both please state your names and what you do at the U of O.

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** I'm Jean Kjellstrand and I'm an assistant professor in counseling psychology and human services. And as such, I teach across multiple departments, both undergrad and grad, and I do research focused on parental incarceration and the impact that that has on kids and then relevant to this conversation. I run the FHS practicum, so the field internship program

**Dr. McWhirter:** Great and I'm a Benedict McWhirter and I've been here 25 years now. I think this is my 25th year at the university of Oregon. So it's been a very interesting experience. Um, I'm a full professor of counseling psychology, and I have assignments really working with students in prevention science.

Um, I teach a lot of our masters courses for couples, family therapy. Um, I've taught in FHS for a number of years, and I currently serve as chair of the undergraduate council in our department. So do a lot of facilitative work with our wonderful team including you two and the work that we do with FHS students.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Why in your opinion, should a student pursue FHS as a major?

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** Yeah, that's a great question. I guess, to talk about the main purpose of FHS is to really assist individuals, families, communities, and society, to function as accurately as possible and help all realize their full potential, so really to improve the overall quality of life. So those who want to affect change, make a positive difference in the lives of others. They have social justice and all these great things to create a more equitable world. This is the makeup for that. Um, and because FHS, is interdisciplinary, drawing from multiple fields, um, it really provides a nice foundation for vast rate of jobs after graduation.

**Dr. McWhirter:** I think I would just add to that as well that I, if you, I think for a lot of students are very interested in learning theory of human change and about psychology and about prevention and really committed to that, but also want to have a real connection to how this might work in community settings and real life settings. And so FHS, I think, has had a long tradition and still does of placing many students in community settings where they can actually activate and engage through experiential learning. Many of the things that they're learning in theory. And then what we've really done is enhanced by having a wonderful faculty that teach across a range of areas as, um, as Dr. Kjellstrand just mentioned related to in a public health, anything from public health to social work, to psychology, to really prevention, working with children and families, uh, and the whole range of things in between. So it's a combination of getting very solid training and theory research practice as well as opportunities for engaging that in communities so they can actually enact the experience and the commitment to social change that Dr. Kjellstrand mentioned.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** Awesome thank you. What excites you about the courses or coursework that students take in this major?

**Dr. McWhirter:** Well, I think kind of a continuation of really what the degree itself offers. It's, it's very, uh, both very theoretical and connected to understanding of human behavior and change processes and how that happens, but also very applied.

So what students get is a very rigorous course of study and also engage in really a professional development as they're doing it. So the idea of Praxis or connecting, you know, work, um, with actual action and with actual theory, it all comes together in the courses and I think students love that most of all, about the curriculum that we, uh, that we provide.

Um, and we actually do a lot of problem solving work, Dr. Kjellstrand manages that the practical experiences, for example. And so there's a lot of hands-on personal growth experiences, and that's a benefit of the program as well.

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** Maybe I could add to that. So, so the students start by learning more about the family and human services broadly, and then learn about issues related to diversity, power, privilege, human development, as Dr. McWhirter mentioned, and then research and ethics are woven into these courses are key competencies and skills that are important in the field. So key interpersonal skills, verbal rented communication. We talk a lot about professionalism, how to present yourself out in the field, diversity, cultural awareness issues, um, all of those are relevant, not only to the field, but that's their personal lives as well.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Within the FHS major, uh, students have the option to declare the direct service intensive emphasis or concentration, or they can remain an FHS major with the prevention science, uh, emphasis. And then could you explain these two pathways and why students might choose either or?

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** So this is a relatively new. Uh, structure of that program. And we felt that there were, there were students who were very interested or more interested in direct service and others who were more interested in what I would say are the macro level issues related to family and human services. So the direct service intensive emphasis really allows the students to look at the delivery of interventions, treatment, recovery, really get hands-on experience. Um, this is more appropriate for those who want to work in the field, work in the trenches, so to speak, but work directly with individuals, groups, and communities. And I'll talk later about some of the, uh, hands-on experiential, um, experiences that come with that.The prevention science really allows students to step back it's more of a macro approach to family and human services. The prevention science allows students to really study that application of research, to prevent cadet conditions, to really create those foundations so that individuals, families can develop in healthy ways, but doing research also has other applications to policy development, uh, to guide practice and programs as well.

And many students end up taking administrative or leadership skills or leadership positions in these fields.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** Thank you, um, so y'all touched a little bit on kind of the practical piece of the major. Um, and this is a two part question. So, so does the program have any required experiential learning opportunities, and if not required, are there other experiences that you would encourage students to consider as they prepare for their next steps?

**Dr. McWhirter:** Yeah, actually, that's probably a better question for Dr.Kjellstrand than me, but I think that the change over that we've made really allows students to come in and not be prepared for two sort of tracks, one is general education, but also very specific in the area of applied science, science and psychology. One way to think of this degree is sort of an undergrad in human development, the family science. Another way to think of it as an undergrad degree in social work, but students can actually go into more applied areas through the practicum, and that's been the tradition of FHS, but students now have the option of staying really more into perhaps a research focus, um, where they're developing coursework, research, engaged in research teams and labs with faculty to prepare themselves for graduate study. And so those two tracks, uh, provide opportunities for students that we haven't had before. That's a new thing. And I think it's a really positive thing. I'm not sure I fully answered your question so Dr. Kjellstrand maybe you can backfill some of that.

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** Sure sure I'll jump in. Um, so I do run the, uh, FHS practicum and for this, uh, so those who are going into direct service intensive are required to spend four terms for a total of 240 hours where they receive hands-on experience out in the field. And they intern with a variety of community service agencies here in my mentality and do a variety of different tasks they might assist with the delivery of interventions, or they might provide tutoring for and or instruction to children, youth, and families. Uh, they may participate in group sessions or participate in agency meetings, but the, the goal of this is really to give the students that hands on experience of working in the field, um, alongside this, uh, we have supervision for the students, an hour each week, and this is provided by the graduate, some graduate supervisors and this is a time when students can really, um, merge what they're learning in classes with their experiences that they're having on the field and really process that and understand, you know, do things in theory, work in practice or what's happening in practice. So it's a way to really synthesize all the information they're getting across, both their classes, as well as, uh, in the field.

And then the prevention science emphasis, um, the more research focus, allows students to get experience with research. And, uh, they have an opportunity to work with individual professors or work in labs as part of their experience. So for instance, um, there've been six undergrads this term that have joined my lab as part of an internship, and they're learning the basics of research, they're doing literature reviews, transcribing interviews, coding, and such, and they, but they also beyond that, have an opportunity to attend scientific presentations and learn about current research so it really gives them a more intensive research experience than the direct service, although both are important. I think for any student's development.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Uh, what careers do students who graduate from this major, typically pursue with and without pursuing additional education and then what are examples of careers that students can go into that they don't typically think of?

**Dr. McWhirter:** Yeah, and it, it it's a very wide range. So we've had students engaged, uh, think of any social service agency, nonprofit organizational work. We've had many students work in development. So go off to work in, for example, um, St. Vincent DePaul, or Goodwill industries and work in their fundraising offices. Um, we've had students work in kind of volunteer coordinator positions in a lot of nonprofit organizations.

Um, many students go on to graduate school as well and so the, the sort of wide training, but also quality training as an undergrad, prepares them for a number of fields from counseling, couples family therapy, for example, to, um, to working in, in social work and sociology programs and so forth. So that's a range of experiences. Probably the most interesting thing we've had with students in the past is getting out there into community and developing kind of programs for youth and kids. Um, so many have done work with, um, incarcerated youth over the years. And Dr. Kjellstrand of course can speak more to that because it's part, part of her area of research as well. Um, so it's a pretty wide range, both for work as well as, uh, graduate study and I think probably area of business and industry, human resources and interesting application that some students have done in the past as well.

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** I will say that a lot of times the internships that people do as part of the DSI turn into jobs or lead to other jobs within those agencies. So it's, um, Another benefit of the DSI as you get a foot into a potential job.

**Dr. McWhirter:** That's really a good point. That's that's happened for many years, so sort of securing job employment while they're doing on the job training and getting internship credit for it. And similarly, I think probably students that are engaged in research labs more and more are having a direct link to getting admitted into, into graduate programs as well so we'll see more of that in the 10 years to come.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** And this next question again, can be for either of you. Um, so y'all were mentioning the, kind of the practical pieces of the major itself, and then also the coursework, so what transferable skills will students gain from pursuing this major?

**Dr. McWhirter:** I think actually critical social thinking is one thing that comes up. So students gain critical thinking skills through college. There is a fair amount of that in FHS, but it's really applied to the social construct. So people are able to come out thinking a little bit about who's engaged in the social contract as, as Russeau originally talked about and as Jefferson wrote about, and, but really recognizing the limitations of our social contract and how people have been excluded from those processes and they may not talk about it in these terms, but they certainly come out with a really good way to critique and evaluate the society in which people are trying to seek services.

So I think probably one of the best skills is that students know they can continue to engage, provide service, do research if they want to go in that direction, but to not trust completely in the systems of care that have also sometimes been difficult or problematic or harmful to people in particular people who are most, um, you know, identify, uh, as vulnerable populations. So I think, uh, students come out with a pretty critical eye, um, and then they have a fair amount of human service skills to go along with that, to implement change.

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** Yeah, and I, I would agree the students learn very specific skills regarding communicating and relating to others. Um, time management ,organization, cultural awareness of the world around them, problem solving, conflict resolution. All of these skills are relevant to family human services and all of these skills can be applied to some of the world's most pressing problems. So the problems of today may be very different from the problems of tomorrow, but they have the skills, they have the tools to address those problems.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** As a research university, we know there's a lot of fascinating discoveries happening in your department. Tell us about something that you find fascinating and that you think listeners might want to learn about.

**Dr. Kjellstrand:** Well, Yes. I think when I look at my colleagues and, and myself and the work that we're we're doing, um, we're really working at developing a lot of interventions around a lot of different problems that face the world. So we have colleagues focused on substance abuse or focused on parenting reentry from prison. how do you prevent delinquency? How, how can you prevent or treat chronic disease? Um, how do you address partner violence or child abuse? Um, how do you, um, talk to people about eating behaviors or eating disorders? And so there are a lot of problems that our research address and for multiple different populations, whether that's around, uh, across the lifespan or underserved or marginalized populations, um, or culturally and racially diverse populations.

**Dr. McWhirter:** Uh, yeah, and to add to that I think one of the things we've changed over the last 10 years of hiring wonderful, uh, new faculty, uh, including Dr. Kjellstrand is, uh, a real range of research acumen that gets really applied in different ways into the FHS program. So it happens in a couple of ways. Sometimes the faculty are directly teaching, but also we have our graduate students who are working directly with undergrads in family and human services and prevention science and that allows a lot of the knowledge base that we've kind of developed to get the generated out there as part of our curriculum. And part of the understanding of what it is that scholars can do, um, and undergrad students can do in the future. So the range of things from a whole cluster of faculty we've hired in health promotion and obesity prevention, um, focused clearly on most marginalized communities. Um, work that Dr. Kjellstrand does and has kind of included work that others have done over time, working with youth and adults in incarcerated settings. Uh, we've got folks doing career and vocational development and running, you know, vocational like career development packages for, for people's suffering interpersonal violence and want to escape that, how do they do that? Well, we've got folks that both have developed packages and have students involved in offering these interventions as well as globally known child, family, um, interventions. So the range of kind of work that we have in the department really facilitates a pretty rich opportunity for students and they don't always take those opportunities, but sometimes they do. And so they've got a really nice connection with people that are doing very interesting work.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Is there anything else that you want to mention or do you feel like we covered it all?

**Dr. McWhirter:** The only thing I would add is to a message to students that, that if students really want to kind of connect learning to the next stages of their own development and to applied work in the field, FHS is a fantastic choice for them.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** So that was a really great interview. I mean, it was really nice to hear, um, uh, kind of that deeper insight into the major from both Dr. McWhirter and Dr. Kjellstrand . I really like the part where they talked about how students get to put into practice, what they're learning in the classroom. And then when they go out into the community, they can use a lot of the skills that they've learned through the externships that are a part of the major already. Um, I know both you and I had, um, very similar experiences through our programs as well so did you want to talk a little bit about your experience with that?

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Yeah. And kind of tying into that too um, the externship piece or internship piece, was that supervision kind of course, that goes with it. So you get that experience. And I had the exact same setup for the grad program. I was in for, you know, the job I'm doing now as an advisor. So I had internships that I needed to do over a certain time period and then alongside those were the supervision courses that I took. And I just remember initially kind of thinking, you know, like, oh, why do I have to do the supervision experience? But it was super helpful to be able to go out and kind of, you know, put into work what I had learned in class, but then also being able to come back to my classmates and the person overseeing the supervision experience and kind of discuss through anything that came up, like maybe I needed help thinking through how to handle a certain situation or just reflect on what I saw the people in that site doing whom I was learning from, you know? Um, so that was really something that I found to be valuable. Did you have a similar experience in your program?

**Ixchel Verdugo:** Yeah it was structured a little bit differently, but it had very much the same concept. So basically through the UOTeach master's program I had the chance to start doing some of that more hands-on piece, which was the student teaching part and then a lot of that, we ended up bringing into the classroom and then vice versa. So it was kind of a back and forth between the theory that we were learning in class and then applying it and then coming back and seeing, and just seeing how, um, how all of it played out.

And then as for kind of like the supervision piece, that part, we had the opportunity to work with teachers who were already retired. So they're kind of the one that did some of our supervision pieces are the ones that observed our teaching lessons and all of that. So that was a really good support in that way and then also our coordinating or cooperating teacher, um, which was like the main teacher in the classroom that we were teaching in. They would also do some of that supervision piece as well, give feedback, all of those pieces.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** One thing that I just thought about too, that was cool about having the experience of going between being in the field and then being in this supervision type of situation with my classmates and the instructor was that it gave me an insight into other jobs or professions either within the field I was in um, so like for example, even if I'm doing advising now I did my internship experiences uh, in the admissions office and the Dean of students office, but then I also saw, you know, my classmates in that, um, supervision kind of seminar in their different positions, like maybe in student housing or in clubs and organizations. So it helped me learn more about the field more broadly, which was very helpful as well.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** and think also the part of that too, is all of the skills that you are taking from all of those different areas. and it doesn't really matter where you end up, but there's a lot of the skills that you are going to be taking in. And then it gives you a better insight on how to present yourself when you're actually out in the field once you graduate so there's a lot of other kind of skills that you don't necessarily see right away, or you get feedback on directly, but there are things that are going to be helping you in the long run and just things that you kind of start picking up, which is really great.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Yeah, no, totally. And then something else that I thought I would highlight here was when Dr. Kjellstrand , she talked about, you know, how through the prevention science emphasis, uh, students get a more extensive, actual research experience and they get to, uh, for example, spend time in a professor's lab or working with individual professors on another project, but she talked about how she is having, um, I think she said six students in her lab for this fall term, and they're basically learning the basics of research, coding, transcribing interviews, and putting together literature reviews and that's such a valuable skill set to develop, you know, um, no matter what you do after you graduate. Um, so that was something that kind of stood out to me. And she also talked about how these students get to attend scientific presentation and learn about new research, which I thought was that must be a really cool experience too, to see like what's happening in the field right now.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** Right exactly. It's kinda nice. Cause like all these pieces start coming together to basically give you an overall pretty in-depth experience even before you graduate, which is really cool.

**Emma Bjorngard Basayne:** Even though in the prevention science emphasis, students have that more extensive research experience component, even just within the, the major at large students still have to take, like at least, you know, one credit of research. So that's, you know, unique across the board for all FHS students in general, it's just that prevention science, that emphasis gives you a little bit more of that experience.

**Ixchel Verdugo:** Right exactly. All right, so then that was the end of our discussion for FHS. Um, Mary is back on this episode, so we will kick it to her.

**Mary Marchetti:** Hi everyone. This is Mary Marchetti joining you with a brief self-care tip. I'm one of the college of education, academic advisors, and a fourth year counseling, psychology PhD student and training therapist. As usual. I want to start with just a brief disclaimer that the brevity and scope of this segment is not intended to stand in for mental health care or medical advice, or even to suggest that self care alone is sufficient for promoting mental health. Rather the hope is to encourage you our listeners, to prioritize your wellbeing and take steps to care for yourself in the ways that you can. Be sure to check out the episode notes for more resources on each tip.

Today's tip is to connect with your personal values. So take a moment to reflect on what is most important to you. What truly matters to you? What motivates or inspires you? These are big questions and perhaps they feel a bit trite. Um, but their answers can really crucially provide us with direction and fulfillment. Uh, if we can learn to live in greater agreement with them. Doing this, knowing and living by your values may seem kind of obvious or straightforward in theory, of course, in reality, there's so much that can get in the way of us defining and staying connected with our values.

Yet researchers consistently find that our distress decreases and emotional health improves when the actions that we choose to spend our time and our energy on are aligned with our values. So as a service to yourself, I encourage you to take some time to identify your values. This might look like just, um, like a brief reflection, but if you'd like to spend some more time on it, which I think everyone could benefit from, take a look at the episode notes for some values, exercises and prompts that were developed by Dr. Stephen Hayes. Um, Dr. Hayes is a prominent researcher in this area and developer of a type of values driven psychotherapy called acceptance and commitment therapy.

So once you've defined your values, you might think about small steps that you can make to incorporate them more and sort of narrow the gap between your behavior and your beliefs. I might start with just one small step and go from there and be sure to do this from a place of kindness, recognizing values, alignment as a real challenge and an ongoing practice for absolutely everyone and a step toward showing yourself care and compassion.

So that's it for today's self-care tip. Thanks for listening and take good care.