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Alum Comes Full Circle, Returns to Teach at USFSP

USF St. Petersburg hired a number of new faculty for start of the Fall 2016 semester. Among those new hires are alumni from the colleges of Arts and Sciences and Education.

Dr. Max Owens, assistant professor of Psychology, graduated from USFSP 10 years ago. He went on to earn a master's degree from Oxford University and a doctorate from the University of London. This fall, he returns to USFSP to share his expertise in clinical and cognitive research pertaining to brain signals associated with depression and the ability to focus attention.

Owens, 38, is a native of Chicago who was raised in St. Petersburg. During his time as an undergraduate student at USFSP, he was able to work on and publish his first professional academic publication.

“What I was able to build up here was general experimental design and analysis expertise, I wanted to pursue that academically and make sure I reached a point where I would be able to ask informed questions about psychology,” he said. “There are few of those types of programs in the U.S., so I started looking abroad.”

Owens enrolled in the Master of Research Psychology program at Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University, where he was able to expand upon his knowledge of methods, experimental design and research.

“When I was there, I developed an interest in depression research. My project was looking at brain signals associated with depression and the ability to focus attention.”

After completing his degree, Owens went on to receive his doctorate at the University of London, where he was able to incorporate his ability to use electroencephalogram (EEG), a measure of brain signals, in experimental research. Part of his research focused on the intergenerational transmission of depression from mothers to their children.

Owens says he is excited to be able to return to USF St. Petersburg as a faculty member and to give students the kind of positive learning experience he had a decade earlier.

“USFSP has a welcoming environment, and the professors are very approachable,” says Owens. “What you can do here as a student is almost limitless – and students gain a lot of personal control over their futures.”

Other alumni returning as faculty include Dr. LaSonya Moore, Instructor of Special Education, and Peyton Jones, visiting instructor of History. Moore graduated with a bachelor's degree in Special Education in 2003 and went on to receive a doctorate in Education from the University of Central Florida. This semester, she is teaching courses and advanced seminars in Exceptional Student Education. Jones graduated with a master's degree in Florida Studies in 2010 before moving on to a four-year fellowship for a doctorate program in History at Tulane University. This semester, he is teaching courses that include American History, War and Society, and World History.
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