

MAY 2024

# THE PARAPHRASE

Official Newsletter of The University of Illinois  
Counseling Center Paraprofessional Program

## Introduction

BY SHIULI RAI

A big, warm hello to all of our readers! Welcome to the last issue of the Paraphrase for this academic year. This is a special issue because every article is written entirely by members of our new CCP cohort! With the year winding down and the advanced cohort graduating college and/or graduating from the CCP Program, this is our sign-off and goodbye to all of you. Thank you for all of your support and we hope you enjoy this read!

## This Issue:

PAGE 01  
INTRODUCTION

PAGE 02  
MENTAL HEALTH  
AWARENESS MONTH

PAGE 03  
THE COUNSELING  
CENTER'S DOG THERAPY  
PROGRAM

PAGE 04  
A TRIBUTE TO ELISE  
LANKER

PAGE 06  
UPCOMING EVENTS





## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH: What it Means and How You Can Participate

BY SARAH SCOTT & HADYN FISCHER

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. This year, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) has declared the theme to be “Take the Moment.” This is meant to encourage more people to take a moment to have deeper and more open conversations about mental illness, hopefully creating a deeper understanding of the topic. The ultimate goal of making May a month to spread awareness around mental health is to demolish the stigma surrounding it.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has created a toolkit for people to spread mental health awareness during May 2024. Their website has promotional materials for anyone to download and share on social media, focusing on how to support and accept people experiencing mental illness and how to have discussions about mental health. SAMHSA shares themes for each week of May, including a focus on older adults, children and teens, mothers, minority groups, and the LGBTQIA+ community with multiple shareable graphics accompanying each theme. The website also provides hashtag guidance, virtual backgrounds, email signatures, and graphics for special observances, like Mother’s Day and Memorial Day.

During this month especially, Counseling Center Paraprofessionals encourage you to speak out, reach out, and take care of yourself! Visit the links below to the SAMHSA and NAMI websites for more information on how to spread awareness this month.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health-awareness-month/toolkit>

<https://www.nami.org/get-involved/awareness-events/mental-health-awareness-month/>







## Counseling Center's Dog Therapy Program

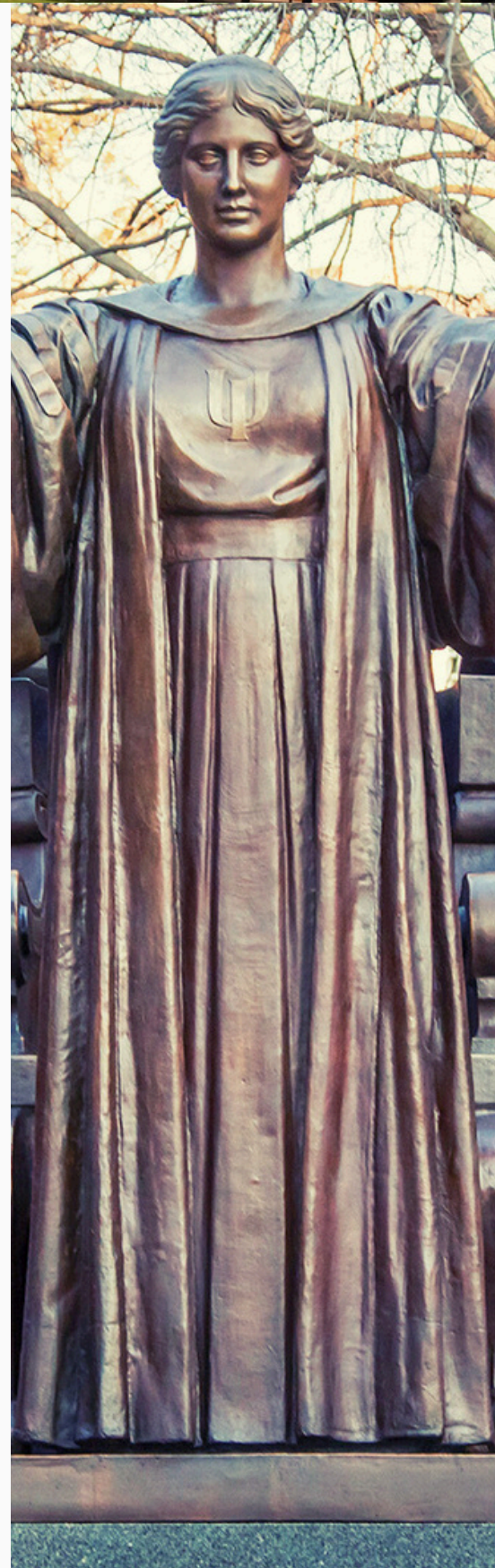
BY JONNY HUERTA

The University of Illinois began its Dog Therapy Program in August 2021. Dog therapy was implemented to provide comfort and support to the students through therapy, outreach, and prevention services.

A therapy dog is trained to assist its owner/teammate in providing mental and physical health support to individuals other than its owner. They are commonly found in hospitals, mental health facilities, schools, and assisted living facilities. At our center, our therapy dog, Louis, aids in providing mental health support to students during therapy sessions. Additionally, Louis participates in outreach programs such as new student orientations, wellness fairs, and awareness events. He also interacts with students during walks around campus throughout the day. Louis' presence at the Counseling Center is part-time, usually two to three days per week, with a varying schedule. To prioritize his mental health and well-being, we ensure he has days off to rest, nap, and enjoy being a dog.

Like other service dogs, Louis undergoes training and certification, but he serves a different purpose. While Louis assists people other than his owner Emily Barnum, service dogs are specifically trained to perform tasks to aid their owner. These tasks range from physical assistance, such as turning on/off light switches and detecting allergens in food, to alerting others during medical emergencies like seizures. Louis offers mental and physical health support to individuals beyond his owner. In contrast, Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) do not need formal training or certification. They are designated as ESAs because they provide emotional support to their owners, specifically for a diagnosed mental health condition or disability.

If you are ever interested in learning more about Louis, he is often posted on the University of Illinois Counseling Center social media accounts such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok.







## A Tribute To Elise Lanker

BY RACHEL NEWMAN & DIKSHA KESHAV

This year, one of our Clinical Counselors, Elise Lanker, will be leaving the Counseling Center to start a private practice. As an instructor for the Counseling Center Paraprofessionals for several years, Elise played a huge role in the CCP program. Through this piece, we want to reflect on all her accomplishments during her time at the U of I's Counseling Center, which began in 2013 when she was a CCP herself. As a CCP she created workshops on salient social identities and deconstructing masculinity. After graduating from both the program and the university in 2014, she became a Pre-Professional Graduate Assistant for the Counseling Centers Sexual Orientation Diversity Allies Outreach team (now known as Queers and Allies). Once she earned a master's in social work from UIUC in 2016, she worked in the community for a few years before returning to the Counseling Center as a Clinical Counselor and Licensed Clinical Social Worker in August 2018.

While here, Elise held a variety of roles as chair and co-chair of the Queers & Allies outreach team, a staff mentor for CCPs, an outreach team supervisor, and, in recent years, co-instructor of the CCP course sequence. The contributions Elise made to Counseling Center services and student experience are widespread and far-reaching.

Her accomplishments include:

- Chairing the Ally Network Training Committee (ANCT), where she developed and facilitated various LGBTQIA+ ally training across campus.
- Presenting at the Big Ten Counseling Centers Conference in 2019 and 2020.
- Co-leading the LGBTQIA+ Peer support space with Dr. Rebecca Schlesinger
- Assisting with the development of the Gender Galaxy brochure
- Assisting with the development of the Supporting Others in Coming Out brochure.
- Helping to develop and integrate the learning objectives for the CCP course sequence syllabi with Dr. Rebecca Schlesinger.

These extensive contributions will continue to enhance the lives of UIUC students and improve campus long after Elise has left. We are grateful for the kindness, groundedness, knowledge, and passion Elise brought to her teachings that will enhance our current and future work in the mental health field.







Here are some statements from just a few of the people Elise touched:

*"Elise brought amazing energy to the classroom. She and Rebecca paired so well when co-teaching 496. On days when we have class, I often find myself curious, asking, "I wonder what Elise's style is today?" She consistently brought important ideas to the table when facilitating workshops and never failed to exude coolness while doing so. We will miss her and her earrings!" - Freddy Raz (CCP)*

*The most apparent thing about Elise is her elite fashion sense. One of the things I always looked forward to about attending class was waiting to see what awesome outfit Elise would wear. It was always something new and chic! I also told her about a small horror story I was writing about and she seemed interested in reading it. That was nice. We got to talk about it a little bit among some other horror films and stuff. She's always been nice to talk to and I'll miss her very much. Elise, good luck with everything! -Aiden O'dell (CCP)*

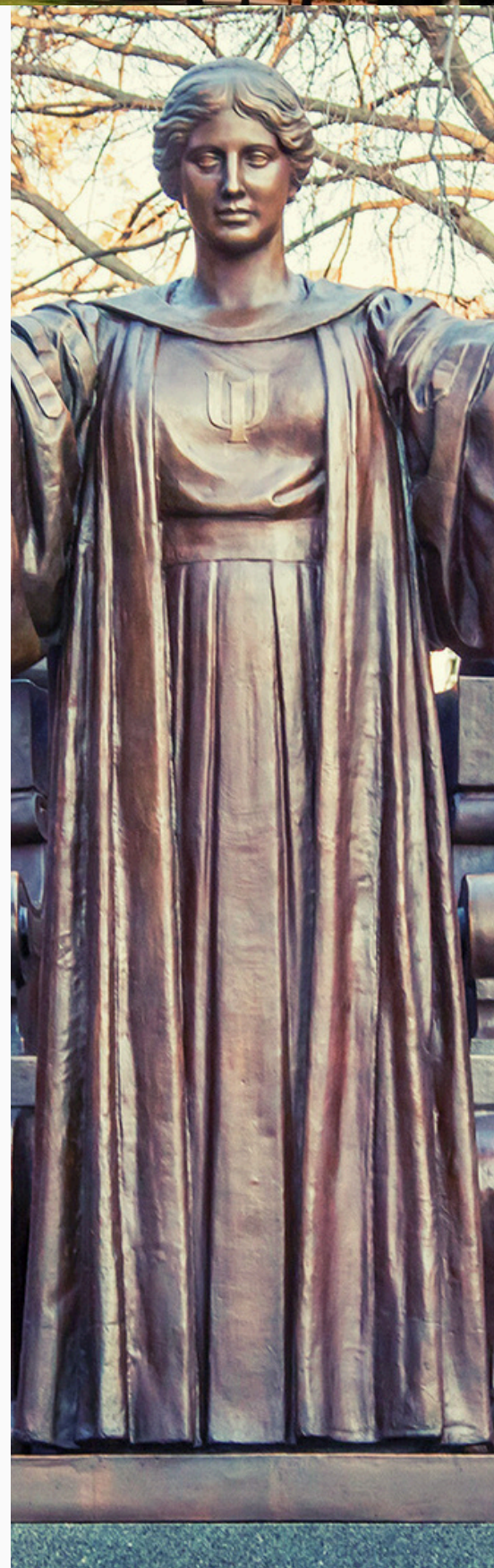
*"I'm so grateful to have had the opportunity to be both a CCP and grad assistant with Elise as co-instructor of the program. She is one of the kindest, most vibrant people I have ever known, and this program won't be the same without her" - Alyssa Aguirre (CCP & GA)*

*"Elise has left quite a mark on the program and on my own professional journey. I am so thankful for all of the ways she supported mine and the program's growth with her passion for prevention and outreach, innovative teaching methods, and personal authenticity. She is a joy to call a colleague and friend and she will be so dearly missed. - Dr. Rebecca Schlesinger (Co-instructor)*

Elise says:

*"Working with CCPs across different roles in my time at the Counseling Center has meant a lot to me as there is something special about getting to work with students outside of the therapy space. I love my clinical work, but I cherish being able to mentor students, learn from them, and get to laugh, think, and dig into mental health and social justice concepts alongside them. To play a role in any part of their education and growth is an honor to me"*

We'll miss you, Elise!







## UPCOMING EVENTS

### LAUREL SILVA

While the end of the school year means we have fewer events to report on, we still have much to look forward to! Congratulations to the graduates and “See you soon!” to our returners! Happy Summer!

