

Cornerstone

Transformational Scholarship at Azusa Pacific University

Office of Research and Grants | Spring 2017



Faculty Spotlight

Paul Shrier
Professor, Department of Practical Theology,
School of Theology
After earning his B.A. degree in
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School of Education
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Image from PBS documentary "The Human Face of Big Data"

Big Data is Here

A new term, or phrase if you wish, Big Data, has appeared in recent years. Indeed, Big Data is here, and it seems, here to stay. Big Data is a new science which aims to better understand and predict human behavior through analysis of large amounts of data and advanced computer technology (e.g. artificial intelligence, machine learning). The term essentially pertains to any information that goes through servers connected to the internet. These data are not necessarily categorized or organized, but they could lead to useful information when studied by data experts using recently developed software platforms such as Hadoop, Alteryx, RapidMiner, SAS Enterprise Miner, and INM SPSS Modeler. The Intellipaat website¹ states, "With the huge amounts of data emanating from various digital sources the importance of analytics has tremendously grown *making the companies to tap the dark data that was considered useless all these years.*" Intellipaat goes on to identify seven areas especially impacted by Big Data analytics: government services, healthcare, academia, insurance, industrialized and natural resources, transportation, and banking and fraud detection. Given the growing imprint of Big Data in modern societies which includes academic research, it is important for us to understand the opportunities it affords and be aware of some associated concerns.

A New York Times article² on opportunities coming from Big Data illustrates how disparate information can be connected to make helpful new findings. For example, the number of Google searches on housing was cited as a better predictor of how robust the near future housing market would be than forecasts made by economists who specialized in real estate. The Times article also indicated how in one region an uptick in Google searches for "Flu symptoms" and "Flu treatment" was followed a couple of weeks later with an increase in hospital emergency room visits by persons with the flu. Should such patterns be repeated, frequency of search data could be a powerful predictor of human....

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Congratulations!!

Recent funding

(February – April 2017)

Rachel Castaneda (BAS). *Evaluation services associated with the UCLA SBIRT program.* Funded by UCLA (\$16,425)

Robert Duke (SOT). *Answering the Call: Equipping Aspiring Pastors.* Funded by The Kern Family Foundation (\$493,745)

Ronald Norris (CLAS). *Mentoring Underrepresented Students in the Student to Scholar Program (S2S).* Funded by the VWR Charitable Foundation (\$9,000)

Mary Rawlings (BAS). *LA County DCFS Student Stipends (Supplement).* Funded by UCLA (LA County) (\$58,434)

Recent notices of awards

(February – April 2017)

Young Kim (BAS). *“Connections matter: The impact of social ties and social capital for STEM college students”.* Collaboration with University of Maryland / NSF sub-award (\$42,369)

Rodney Sturdivant (CLAS). *“Student engagement in Statistics using technology: Making data based decisions”.* Collaboration with Grinnell College / NSF sub-award (\$59,136)



Student Spotlight

David Pyle, School of Education



... at Azusa Pacific was a decision my family and I did not take lightly. In my role as an educator, we decided it was critical to serve as a living, breathing example of what it means to be a life-long learner. As our cohort (AZ 15) wraps up its second year, we reflect on the importance of God’s gentle touch on each of our lives and His ability to bring us together as faithful educators to impact lives of the students and families we serve.

With the guidance and support of the entire educational staff at APU, most notably the leadership of Dr. Kent Bechler, Dr. Greg Plutko, and Dr. Gary Railsback, I have grown in my abilities to research important topics facing the K-12 educational community. The majority of my personal research has revolved around technology implementation and the impact personalized learning has on student achievement. During the first year of my coursework, I was honored to be selected as one of ten superintendents nationwide for a year-long fellowship with the Lexington Institute. The Lexington Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public policy think tank headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. Founded in 1998, its major areas of focus include education, national security, energy, and logistics. The fellowship concluded with a presentation of our cohort’s findings to policy makers in Washington DC after visiting and reviewing personalized learning programs across the county. Our research into this cutting edge delivery model will undoubtedly impact future generations.

David is the superintendent of Nuvew Unified School District which has four schools in the area between Perris and Hemet, California.

The support I have received from the greater APU community, along with the generous academic scholarship from the Education Department, has assisted me in fulfilling God’s perfect plan in my professional life. I look forward to the next stages of the Ed.D. program and am eternally grateful for the strong friendships I have established with the other members of my cohort as we continue to learn from one another throughout this incredible journey.

We worshipped together and received ashes for Ash Wednesday

We broke bread together under the afternoon sun and soft jazz

We learned from each other

We grappled with tough topics like gender identity issues and presidential election

We took a moment to be still in a Stillness Tent

We explored virtual reality and the neuropsychology of balance



CDL 2017 Reflection

By Ben Marsh, CDL Director

On March 1, 2017, at the Common Day of Learning, the APU community ushered in the Lenten season by showcasing its scholarship, expertise, and artistry. Across 75 sessions, attendees enjoyed thoughtful discussion on topics from a variety of academic disciplines. The day was complemented with spiritually and aesthetically pleasing moments made possible by a special Ash Wednesday service followed by lunch and jazz music on the west campus lawn and an afternoon performance by APU’s gospel choir in Kresge Plaza. [\[Link to photos\]](#)





Faculty Spotlight



... the University of Waterloo, Dr. Paul Shrier worked for a few years in business and finance, including being a stockbroker on Canada's equivalent of Wall Street. As a 30 year old, he yearned to semi-retire in rural Canada along with his dog, but then had a radical change in mind set and career. Indeed, Dr. Shrier went to pursue a M.A. in biblical studies, then Ph.D. in practical theology, from Fuller Theological Seminary. He has been at APU since

1997, first as an adjunct, then full-time in 2002.

Dr. Shrier's areas of expertise include practical theology as it relates to the integration of faith in daily life with social issues, economics, and science. He has written and presented on alcohol recovery programs, Christians in the workplace, and on the theology of many diverse topics including stem cell research, trauma, stress, capitalism, parenting, work, and empathy, to name just a few! For the past four years, Dr. Shrier has focused his scholarship on theology as it relates to adoption and foster care, and theology and disability.

His latest accomplishment is an outstanding short documentary film, *Messengers of Hope* (2016), which focuses on a boy with autism, his church, and the Special Olympics. This movie presents Michael and his parents' Christian faith development and their church's initial and growing commitment to families in their congregation that have persons with disabilities. Michael and his family are ultimately transformed as their church community joins them in participating in Southern California Special Olympics and then the World Games. *Messengers of Hope* brings the vital role of community (faith community, in this case) to the forefront of the conversation. The website for the film is MessengersOfHopeFilm.com.



Dr. Shrier is a prolific scholar with a resume that touts several professional DVD's and films in addition to multiple presentations and publications which include a couple of small articles in *Christianity Today*. He has received several grants and awards while at APU, including two significant grants from the Kern Family Foundation totaling more than \$300,000, and a \$21,000 Lilly grant to develop the *Christians in the Workplace* workbook. Dr. Shrier is especially pleased to see his videos instrumental in helping others effect positive changes to their lives. Over 30,000 people have used his *Christians in the Workplace* curriculum, many who went on to make meaningful changes to some daily living practices. Dr. Shrier currently has one article and one book chapter about theology, sports, and disability in press as well as a chapter in a book about adoption, soon to be released.

Kudos to Dr. Shrier are also in order since he recently was named the Beverly Hardcastle Stanford Fellowship awardee for 2017-18. Dr. Shrier will use the award to tell stories of special persons through videos.



"We love learning because of our love of God and His wonderful creation, desiring to know and understand. We teach and write because of our love of neighbor, and sharing what we learn."

David Weeks, Ph.D., Dean, Honors College

Cornerstone

Calendar & Events

Events/Workshops

Writers Retreats 2017

May 23-26: Top Performers

June 13-16: Traditional

June 20-23: Early Career

July 11-14: Traditional

RCR Training:

May 30, 2017: 8am-1pm

Research Misconduct, Peer Review, Conflict of Interest, Human Subjects Research, Mentorship

Research Ethics Deadlines

IRB (human subjects research)

June 7, 2017: Full Board Review

Application deadline for June 21 meeting

IACUC (animal research)

June 14, 2017: Protocol or amendment

deadline for June 21 meeting

Summer Institute

An event jointly planned by faculty and staff of the APU **School of Education** and **School of Theology**, the Summer Institute on Theology and Disability aims to spark wonderful conversations in faith communities across Southern California about how to be fully available for those with different abilities. More info at <http://faithanddisability.org/>

SUMMER INSTITUTE ON

& THEOLOGY DISABILITY

JUNE 5-8, 2017 • AZUSA, CA

Exploring the Intersections of
Disability, Theology, and Faith

For more information: <http://faithanddisability.org/>



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(Big Data is Here article, continued)

... behavior, allowing hospitals to prepare ahead for heavier than usual usage of their emergency rooms. Finally, the Times article discussed how NYPD used data on history of arrests along with other things such as weather, special events, and the proximity to paydays and holidays to anticipate criminal behavior so as have officers stationed at the right time and place.

Not surprising, Big Data analytics or data mining is widely used by social media and dating websites. These sites are constantly searching the internet for any pieces of information, personal as well as public, to help them better identify and characterize individuals who interact with these websites. Indeed, many social media users would be astounded at the information collected on them through Big Data analytics.

Much good can come from the emergence of Big Data, both for society as a whole and for the entities using it to gain a competitive edge. Nevertheless, many cite concerns about Big Data and suggest it should be embraced with caution. There are justifiable fears about encroachment on individual privacy. Any email contacts, online purchases, visits to a website, or other activities done through a server have potential to be mined and stored into an individual's profile for use by unknown entities if not made entirely public. Another point of unease around Big Data is the possibility of "false findings". Since Big Data analytics essentially find correlations but not the causes behind them, there is the real possibility that the reason for a "finding" could be something other than the correlation one might have assumed from data analytics.

Regardless of the cautions noted above, Big Data analytics has a large and growing presence in modern culture. It is here to stay! At APU, we are responding to opportunities and challenges Big Data presents by hosting the first **Southern California Big Data Discovery Summit on November 4, 2017**. This summit is a day-long conference being organized through a collaboration involving faculty and representatives from ORG. The effort is chaired by Chong Ho (Alex) Yu of the Department of Psychology and quantitative consultant for the APU Office of Research and Grants. The summit will provide researchers and analysts from a variety of disciplines, along with others who have interest in learning more about Big Data, opportunities to share information and research findings on Big Data analytics. We hope for discussions around databases and data warehousing, data mining, text mining, business intelligence, machine learning, pattern recognition, and data visualization. Those in the APU community are highly encouraged to consider applying to present, as well as attending this Big Data Summit in November. Details on registering and applying to present at the Southern California Big Data Discovery Summit can be found here:

<http://www.apu.edu/big-data-summit/>

¹ <https://intellipaat.com/blog/7-big-data-examples-application-of-big-data-in-real-life/>

² <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/12/sunday-review/big-datas-impact-in-the-world.html>

Congratulations 2017 SURE awardees!!

8 APU student-faculty research teams received 2017 SURE (Scholarly Undergraduate Research Experience) Awards for summer research:

- ✦ Zachary Fuhr/Ethan Schrum (CLAS History and Political Science)
- ✦ Abel de Castro/Megan Prosser (CLAS Biology and Chemistry)
- ✦ Austin Santiago/Kathleen Tallman (CLAS Biology and Chemistry)
- ✦ Ryan Brown/Rick Sturdivant (CLAS Engineering and Computer Science)
- ✦ Peter John Nishimoto/Cheryl Boyd (SON Nursing)
- ✦ Bri Askew/Teresa Pegors (BAS Undergraduate Psychology)
- ✦ Rachel Lundblom/Robert Dudley (BAS Exercise and Sports Science)
- ✦ Cherrish Hardy/Rico Vitz (SOT Philosophy)

Recent Research Events @ APU

UG Research Showcases

Four undergraduate student/faculty teams showcased their research in spring 2017. Student researchers from philosophy, math, psychology and political science discussed the origins, challenges, benefits, and accomplishments of their recent research experiences. Thank you, Dr. Veronica Gutierrez, for organizing these formative events.



Psychology Research Symposium

BAS Psych department hosted 8 research presentations this academic year on Social Psychology (Brian Collison, Matt Heller), Educational Psychology (Julianne Edwards), Cultural/Developmental Psych (Alan Oda), Psych of Christianity (William Whitney, Curtis Lehmann, Brian Eck), Neuroscience (Teresa Pegors) and Clinical Psychology (Curtis Lehmann). Congrats on this achievement!



Nursing Research Symposium

The 13th Annual Nursing Research Symposium, "Shaping the Health of Our Nation through Research and Evidence-Based Practice" took place on March 30. Congratulations on yet another well done event that brought together faculty, students, staff and community partners.



Social Work Students

Research Showcase: One judge at the April 25 SW research showcase remarked to department organizers: "Congratulations on another excellent social work research showcase. The entire event was encouraging and stimulating for those in attendance. Kudos to you and your team for a terrific evening".

Poster Awards: Eight BSW seniors participated in the student research competition at the annual national undergrad social work conference (BPD) in New Orleans in March (bpdonline.org). Laura Hoak and Emily Elzenberger won 1st prize and 3rd prize. Congratulations to Laura, Emily, Dr. Jacob, and all APU SW student participants!