

## INVITED EDITORIAL: The 2017–2018 Psi Chi Presidential Initiative: Help Helped Me

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# HELP HELPED ME

This article is proudly published in support of the #Help\_HelpedMe Initiative.

**H**elp is a multidimensional psychological construct. In our discipline, we often study help-seeking behaviors (White, Clough, & Casey, 2018) and the stigma that can be associated with seeking help (Corrigan, 2005). Individuals experiencing self-stigma have reduced self-esteem and more negative attitudes toward seeking psychological treatment (Tucker et al., 2013). In our society, help providers are often seen as heroic figures, and rightly so. The prototypical figures that come to mind are firefighters, police officers, and emergency medical technicians who dedicate much of their professional lives to the service of others.

Of course, the view of help providers is much broader than those prototypical figures. Psi Chi exists in the realm of worldwide undergraduate and graduate psychology education, so that is the context for my consideration of help and helping behavior, and there are certainly stressors that affect the performance and success of college students (Beiter et al., 2015; Goodwin, Behan, Kelly, McCarthy, & Horgan, 2016). When I consider the structure of education today, the construct of *help* may be the ultimate tie that binds. Thinking about the 23.1 million undergraduate students and 4,913 degree-granting college and universities (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018) in the United States during 2016–2017, the amount of help available and the amount of help provided to students is most certainly massive. Consider the number of writing centers, math learning centers, counseling centers, career centers, academic advisors, and all the professionals working in these units on college campuses. Every semester I see promotional materials for test anxiety workshops, study skills workshops, offers to organize study groups, tutoring sessions, and so on. The teaching component of a professor's job responsibility is

certainly about providing help, and that manifests in more than just an understanding of content or acquisition of skill; that help includes the training and provision of teaching assistants, learning assistants, being available for office hours, and answering countless e-mail inquiries. Scholarly activity can be interpreted as helping our discipline better understand the mind and behavior. If service is considered as providing help to the institution (department, college, university), community, or discipline, then *help* could be seen as the core of the trinity of a professor's professional life: teaching, scholarship, and service.

Given this premium that higher education places on the provision of help, it is unfortunate that there is stigma associated with help-seeking. As your 2017–2018 President of Psi Chi and with the support of the Psi Chi Board of Directors, I have launched a presidential initiative titled **Help Helped Me**. The goal of this initiative is to leverage the multiple strengths of Psi Chi to promote the stories of those individuals who have successfully sought help. By telling help-seeking success stories, we aim to improve health (mental, physical, and academic health) on campuses and in communities. When help-seeking is destigmatized, the hope is that unnecessary human suffering is reduced and individuals are empowered to lead more positive and productive lives.

Throughout 2018 Psi Chi will be rolling out resources made available to members and chapters who wish to participate in activities related to the **Help Helped Me** initiative. Participation in these activities and events will be opt-in, that is, voluntary in nature. Additionally, the strong hope is that chapters that opt in to participate will also include a research component to their **Help Helped Me** chapter activities, not forgetting the mission of Psi

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Chi in “recognizing and promoting excellence in the science and application of psychology.” Perhaps a chapter hosts a movie night followed by a guided discussion, with a goal of increasing awareness of a unit on campus (e.g., advising office, counseling center). With cooperation with those units, perhaps data could be collected to determine if there was increased foot-traffic, e-mail inquiries, or website hits about the services provided by those offices. Chapters might create resource guides for the campus and community, which provide curated lists of help resources available to students, staff, and faculty. A chapter might develop a ‘Help Ambassadors’ program where students, invited by faculty members, visit classrooms and share uplifting stories of help that occur regularly on campus. There are nearly unlimited methods by which Psi Chi chapter members could work together locally to tell and promote help helped me stories—and throughout this initiative we will leverage social media by using the hashtag **#help\_helpedme**.

*Psi Chi Journal* has a 23-year history of publishing research on a wide range of areas including help seeking behavior and specific support to students interested in conducting empirical research. Below, a short list of related journal articles is included that readers are encouraged to review and share with others in their communities (see Appendix). Perhaps these articles might also inspire ideas for potential types of research related to help-seeking behavior that you could conduct in the near future.

*Psi Chi Journal’s* Editorial Team are eager to welcome additional research articles that could support the purpose of the **Help Helped Me** Initiative. In February, a special call for submissions will be announced for empirical research related to help-seeking behavior. This promotion will take place via *Psi Chi’s* magazine, website, digest e-mails, and social media. As always, student and faculty authors are welcome to submit, and submissions will also remain open for all other areas of psychological research. Complete submission guidelines may be viewed at [https://www.psichi.org/?page=JN\\_Submissions](https://www.psichi.org/?page=JN_Submissions)

Imagine a future where the recipients of help were as celebrated as the providers of help. I hope you will join *Psi Chi* and this initiative to promote how help helps by sharing our success stories, thus encouraging an awareness and atmosphere of positive growth. There are times in everyone’s life where some sort of help would be beneficial. Let us work together to make sure that the positive benefits of help are pervasive in our culture.

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## APPENDIX

### Recommended Reading

- Barford, K. A., Pope, J. B., Harlow, T. F., & Hudson, E. P. (2014). Predicting empathy and prosocial behavior: Who cares and when? *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research, 19*, 202–213. <https://doi.org/10.24839/2164-8204.JN19.4.202>
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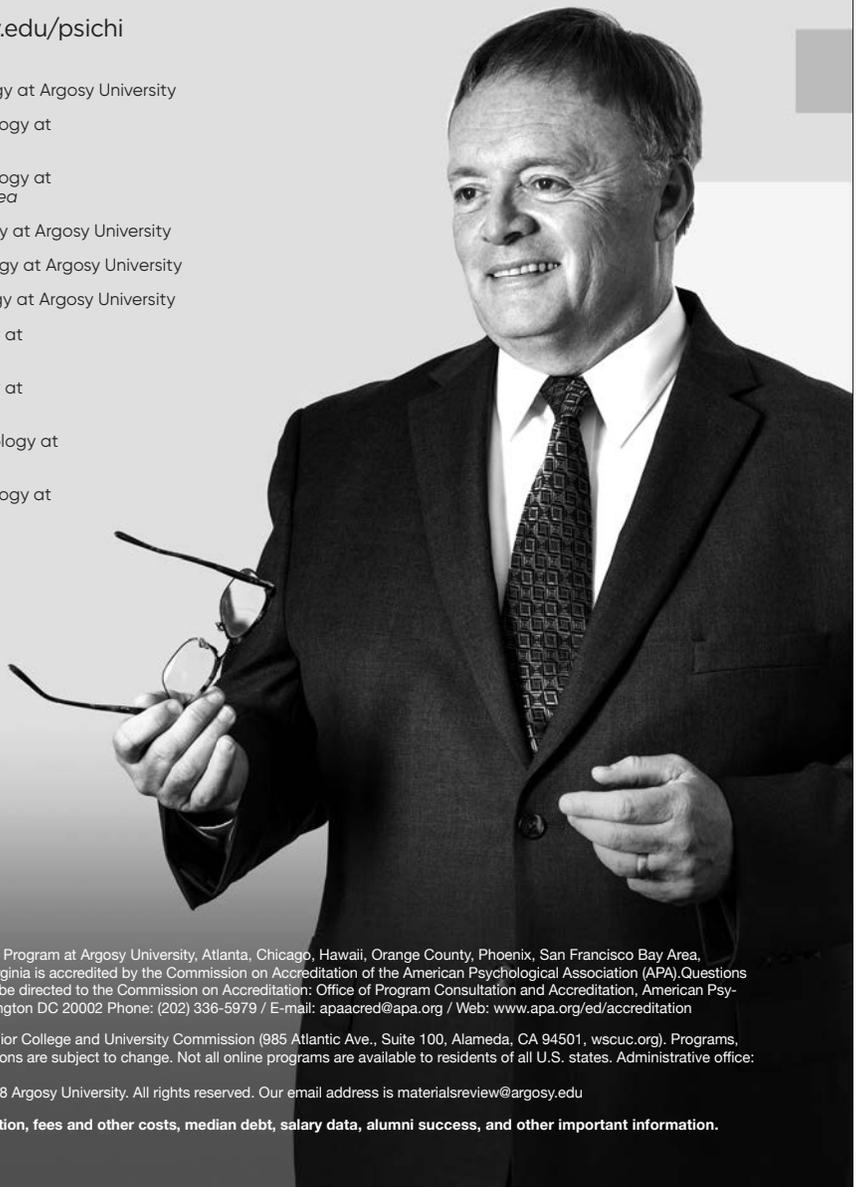
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This spring, consider submitting research to *Psi Chi Journal* that is related to help-seeking behavior. Psi Chi is launching a new 2018 initiative, which will establish a toolkit of resources that encourage people to feel comfortable seeking help concerning a mental illness, bullying, sexual harassment/abuse, tutoring, test taking, etc.

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R. Eric Landrum, PhD  
Psi Chi President

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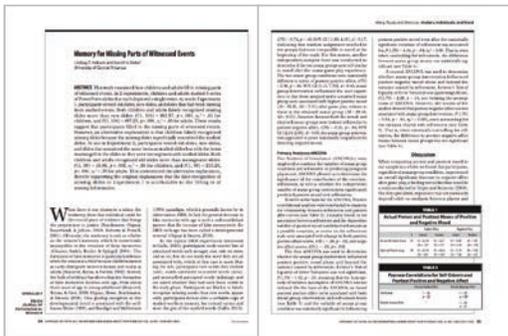
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