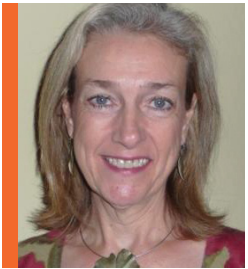


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The Group Foundation Scholarship Program: A View from the Reviewers

Karen Travis, LCSW, BCD, CGP, AGPA-F, Editor, Group Assets

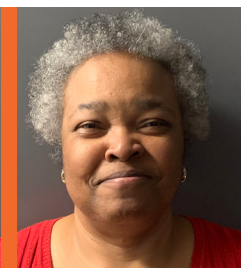


As our sights turn toward autumn, the holiday season, and the anticipation of AGPA Connect 2023, so begins the scholarship application process. The Group Foundation is pleased to support a scholarship program that helps those new to the field attend AGPA Connect

and find a professional home. The program plays a vital part in advancing the mission of the Group Foundation for Advancing Mental Health, providing access to the premier conference training ground in group therapy—AGPA Connect.

Much is involved before the recipient arrives, attends the Institute and Conference, and makes it to the Saturday luncheon to be honored. Receiving scholarship applications is an exciting time. In the past, we have featured scholarship recipients; in this issue, we highlight three of the reviewers of scholarship applications and hear their thoughts on the selection process. Being a past Chair of the Scholarship and Awards Committee, I am familiar with the rewarding experience of reviewing scholarship applications and making decisions about who will receive the awards. That is one of the clear messages that came through from the reviewers featured in this article: Thomas Hurster, MSS, CGP, AGPA-F, Co-Chair of the Children and Adolescents SIG; Rachelle Rene, PhD, BCB, HSM, CGP, Co-Chair of the Women in Group Psychotherapy SIG; and Marcée Turner, PhD, CGP, Co-Chair of the Racial and Ethnic Diversity (RED) SIG.

All three independently emphasized how the candidate's statements of intent help the reviewers understand their desires to attend, what they hope to gain, offer compelling stories about their life, and how they became interested in mental health and group therapy as a modality of treatment. Along with the letter of intent and letters of recommendation, the applicants' CV clearly demonstrates their interest in the named/endowed scholarship they are applying for. The SIG Co-Chairs work closely together in the review process, often each reading the applications independently then sharing their findings and coming up with the final list to submit to the Scholarship and Awards Committee. Mentoring also became clear from the reviewers. After being awarded the scholarship, the recipient is welcomed by a letter, and once at AGPA Connect, SIG Co-Chairs, Scholarship and Awards Committee members, Foundation staff and Board members, and/or the AGPA Membership Engagement Committee members often spend time with them, introducing them to people in AGPA, inviting them to SIG meetings, receptions, etc. The intent is that through this personal contact scholarship awardees will feel connected, engaged, and become part of the group—AGPA.



Marcée Turner's shares her story as a past scholarship recipient, as well as her thoughts on the review process.

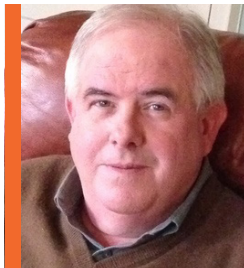
It was with great excitement that I looked forward to attending the 2014 AGPA Annual Meeting (since renamed AGPA Connect) in Boston.

I was a relatively new AGPA member, having attended my first AGPA Annual Meeting a year before in New Orleans. My 2013 highlights included exposure to more group psychotherapy, meeting and connecting with amazing colleagues, becoming a member of the Racial and Ethnic Diversity and College Counseling and Other Educational Settings (CC) SIGs, and meeting those with whom I would facilitate an all-day workshop. A huge part of my being able to attend AGPA Connect was the scholarship assistance I received.

As one of my responsibilities as a RED SIG Co-Chair, I have the privilege of reviewing applications for the Josephine M. Cunningham Tervalon Scholarship, which offers a woman of color up to the full six-day tuition to AGPA Connect and a travel stipend. The scholarship review process offers me a way to pay it forward for another woman of color to have the opportunity to increase their knowledge of group psychotherapy, further their professional development and training, and potentially open doors to unimaginable experiences.

My experience of reviewing scholarship applications allowed me to learn about amazing women of color, their interest and desire to increase their knowledge about group psychotherapy, and to meet several of them at AGPA Connect. Applicants shared their excitement, enthusiasm, and dedication to serving and assisting clients in a variety of settings through the facilitation of groups.

Please consider applying for a scholarship to attend AGPA Connect 2023! If you can attend, you will learn about group psychotherapy, as well as about yourself, meet incredible colleagues who may become lifelong friends, and interact with and within my professional home, the American Group Psychotherapy Association.



Tom Hurster's story clearly describes how much he believes in the process and mentoring.

As one of the three Co-Chairs of the Children and Adolescents Special Interest Groups (SIG), I am one of the reviewers for two named scholarships connected to the

SIG—the Howard and Barbara Goldstein Scholarship and the Saul Scheidlinger Scholarship. We initially go through the applications seeking people who have a directly expressed interest in and/or experience in working with youth in groups. An interest in working with youth is most easily gleaned from the candidate's personal statement, their CVs, prior group coursework and experience, and the letters of recommendation.

Sometimes the decisions can be difficult, even agonizing, as there are a number of candidates with compelling stories and strong needs, and there are only two scholarships. We take some comfort in the reality that all applicants will get some financial help, often substantial, even if they do not get a named scholarship. Over the years, I have encouraged graduate students and colleagues early in their careers to apply for named scholarships when they show a strong interest in group therapy. I guide students to apply for those scholarships that most fit their circumstances or interests. Similarly, we will promote the two scholarships through our SIG discussions, and I know other clinicians who have encouraged their students and supervisees to apply. I very much enjoy spending time with the recipients at AGPA Connect and strongly urge them to join us for the SIG events (we also treat them to dinner). There is a great deal of satisfaction that comes from having scholarship recipients return to AGPA, become involved in the Children and Adolescents SIG, and watch them develop in their abilities as group therapists with youth. This is what makes the entire process so worthwhile for me. I look forward to this year's applications as we return to New York City and in person! Yeah!



Rachelle Rene demonstrates the respect for applicants and the process they go through in risking the ask.

As a Co-Chair of the Women's SIG, one of our tasks is to review and make recommendations for scholarship recipients for the upcoming AGPA Connect.

My Co-Chair and I have devised strategies that allow us to move through the applications in a way that honors and gives voice to each applicant. Reading the applications provides us a window into the potential recipient's interests and desire to contribute to

the advancement of group psychotherapy in their community, locally or globally. One of the highlights of this process is learning more about these candidates. As reviewers, it can be mundane to go through what sometimes seems like a zillion applications, however, it is the candidate's stories themselves that ignite that process, excitedly reframing and fine tuning our lens. They provide us a glimmer of access into their lives and their passions as students in pursuit of further scholarly education or working professionals managing the nuances of life, or both. In their statement essays, these applicants grab our attention through their authenticity, individuality, and emotional resilience. It is a rewarding experience for us as we discuss what we've learned from these candidates. It's even more thrilling when we see our top candidate receive a scholarship. This feeling is further solidified when we meet and speak with these recipients in person or virtually. We understand that applying for scholarships can oftentimes be time consuming and even challenging, however, we encourage candidates to go for it anyway! Let your voice be heard!

Here a few quotes from three of last year's scholarship attendees, which let us know the rewards of the scholarship program.

"My experience at AGPA Connect 2022 was nothing short of incredible, and I am extremely grateful that I was awarded a scholarship to attend the conference. The conference provided me with opportunities to process my own personal reactions and growth, while also learning and observing great group work."

"In my experience, conferences have been distant and non-engaging, but this was not the case with the AGPA Connect. I ended every day exhausted from high levels of mental and emotional engagement and excited to take my new learning into my daily work."

"Thank you to the generous donors who made it possible for me to attend AGPA Connect 2022. I felt honored to receive a tuition scholarship. Having this opportunity be fully paid for helped me as a working mother of two be at ease while attending."

I want to thank Marcée, Tom, and Rachelle for their insights into the review process. Hopefully it gives you an appreciation for all that goes into the scholarship program. It goes without saying how much the Group Foundation appreciates all our donors to this crucial part of the Foundation's mission.

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To apply for a scholarship, visit AGPA’s website at www.agpa.org/Foundation/scholarships, where there is detailed information and required application forms. There is a grace period for applications through November 15, 2022. Additional questions? E-mail chughes@agpa.org.

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