

Conversations with GSA: Alexandra Checkers

by The SBU Graduate Magazine Editorial Team



This month, we sat down with Alexandra Checkers, who is a 3rd year MSW student in the School of Social Welfare. She holds a Bachelor's degree in psychology and Master's in Business Administration from St. John's University. She currently works in the department of Psychiatry as a research coordinator looking at alternative treatments for treatment resistant depression. In the future, she hopes to work as a school social worker.

GradMag: What motivated you to pursue you to get a degree in social work?

Alexandra Checkers: I always knew I wanted to pursue a career in mental health, which led me to pursue a bachelor's degree in psychology. During the year 2020, I felt inspired to pursue a career that aligned with my morals and could provide me the opportunity to create positive change within society. Becoming a social worker is not merely a career choice, but is a calling rooted in the belief of dignity and resilience of all. This passion is fueled by the desire to create positive change, to advocate for those who may not have a voice, and to contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society.

GradMag: What motivated you to become a Graduate Student Advocate?

AC: As a future social worker, one of the most important aspects of my job will be advocating for my clients to support them in a number of ways. When I saw this position, I felt like it was a perfect opportunity for me to follow my passion and help my fellow graduate students as we navigate graduate school.

GradMag: What are the different ways you usually use to help students?

AC: I help students in a number of ways but most frequently I assist students in getting connected to resources for academic, financial and career support. I also can provide guidance for students struggling with personal issues or conflict with friends/professors. Students can reach me via email, set up a virtual meeting or in-person.

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GradMag: Is there an underrated on-campus resource that you recommend every student should know about?

AC: As a future social worker I think one of the greatest services that Stony Brook offers to students is the Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). As we all know graduate school can be extremely stressful on top of everything else going on in one's life. Having access to mental health services can help prevent burnout, enhance academic performance, and promote overall success in their studies and future careers. In addition, prioritizing mental health promotes a supportive and inclusive academic environment, encouraging open dialogue and reducing the stigma associated with seeking help.

GradMag: As AI has become more prevalent in the classroom, how do you recommend to students that they use these tools correctly?

AC: In the ever changing world of technology, I think it is inevitable that students may encounter using AI. While this is of course my personal opinion, I feel AI can be a useful tool to inspire creativity and assist students with a number of things. This can be from anything such as providing a grammar check or synonyms for a word to help getting out of a rut of writer's block. It is also important that students utilize AI tools effectively by understanding their purpose and learning how they function. Students should evaluate the results provided, cross-referencing them with other sources to ensure accuracy. Additionally, students must prioritize privacy and data security, being cautious about the information they input and respecting ethical guidelines. Seeking assistance from teachers when unsure is encouraged, to foster a responsible and informed approach to utilizing AI. When used appropriately, I believe AI can enhance learning and enhance valuable critical thinking and digital literacy skills essential for the future.

GradMag: You also mentioned that you have adopted a few dogs!

AC: Yes! I have always loved pitbulls and felt they are such a misunderstood breed. My family knew how badly I wanted to adopt one from the shelter. Come March 2019, I was home for spring break and my parents suggested going to the shelter to look at dogs. I quickly fell in love, but my parents weren't 100%. A few days later we were able to take home our sweet Milo. A few months later there was a bluenose pitbull the shelter had posted, this was my absolute dream dog! I sent a photo to my mom, she quickly turned me down. A week later she and my dad sat me down and surprised my sister and I! Our family was complete once Blu came home. A year later my fiancé and his parents adopted a German Shepard from the shelter, Murph. My dream is to continue adopting dogs from the shelter and giving these animals a second chance at finding a loving home.

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