

Junior David Duncan studies physiological effects of immigration policies

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DUNCAN. AVID JUNIOR at Elon niversity, is the University, is recent recipient of the Leadership Prize scholarship grant of \$10,000 awarded to students who apply their intellectual and dership skills toward problem solving. "The unique component

of the Leadership Prize is to create some type of solution or sustainable plan," Duncan said. "So the goal really is to educate but also produce something of value on behalf of these students." Duncan's adviser, Carmen

Monico, an assistant professor of human service studies, has been a strong advocate for his undergraduate research.

"Undergraduate research is an exploration of a topic of interest that students engage in where they have the opportunity to actually learn about the research process, includ-ing all the way from how you formulate a research question to actually writing a report," Monico said.

Defining his research

Duncan's research focuses on examining the deportation threat of Hispanic immigrant college students and examining how that threat affects their mental health and coping mechanisms.

"I want to address that many institutions that don't have a large population of these types of students often times don't understand or realize the depth of anxiety or depression or trauma that these students might be enduring," Duncan said. Duncan found inspiration

for his research when he was on a mission trip in Puerto Rico during his junior year of high school.

"We stayed there as a class and we helped paint. We helped some type of educational youth service and we went to senior citizen homes and helped them. It was just all around a really good opportunity for us," Duncan said.

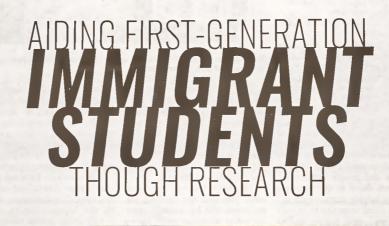
Duncan found himself drawn to the culture, history and values of the Hispanic people and had been pro-foundly impacted by his experience there.

"My life and my purpose and my goal isn't just for my-self," Duncan said. "In some way, I was like, 'Okay, I want to work with Hispanic people and I need to give back somehow,' and again at that mo-ment I didn't know what that looked like."

Duncan's inspiration came during his first Winter Term at Elon while taking an "An-thropology of Babies" course. Duncan was searching for a way to combine his interests in



Junior David Duncan during his high school trip to Puerto Rico that inspired him to conduct research regarding the physiological effects of immigrations policies on immigrant children.



politics, law and children, and found the term "Anchor Babies.

This term used to describe children of immigrants who were born on U.S. soil and attained their citizenship that way.

The term is like they 'anchor' their family to the states, but that's not true," Duncan said. "A lot of times those parents have to make a decision on whether they keep the child in the states or take them back to their home country."

As a psychology major and Spanish minor, Duncan hopes to utilize his research to alert mental health professionals, higher education profession-als and legal counsel about these issues

"Those three things are very important so hopeful-ly we'll be able to educate [professionals] on the experiences of these students," Duncan said.

Duncan said this psy-chological dynamic piqued his interest of the mental health aspects of the effects of immigration and of being a first-generation student from a Hispanic family. "What we're seeing is that a

lot of these students, on top of the normal college stress that we all endure, are also having to deal with issues back at home," Duncan said.

The effects of an uncertain future in terms of citizenship, visas and family life provide additional mental stress for immigrants or students of immigrant families.

The future is uncertain for them, the present is uncer-tain, and so that sort of weird state of uncertainty produces a lot of enduring traumation experiences," Duncan said. "That's sort of what we want to

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ALC MANDELL ISTAF PHDIOGRA Duncan poses by Global Neighborhood where flags of international students are hung around the neighborhood.

address, is giving them a voice to talk about those experienc-es but also alerting higher ed-ucation professionals, alerting mental health professionals to provide accurate resources for them.

Finding relevance with DACA

Monico said that some of the research revolves around those who are DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) beneficiaries.

"When David came to me, I said, 'So if you're interested in migration, let's look at what is happening right now and who are the most affected," Monico said.

According to Monico DACA beneficiaries most often arrived in the United States as a result of the desperate decisions of their parents regarding economic conditions or violence in their

countries of origin.

"It's the fear of deportation and how that impacts their lives, and in this case, because they came as children, they have a conscious of being who they are," Monico said.

The research is coinciding with prominent controversy regarding immigration laws and DACA reformation within the country.

"It's important because it's timely, because it speaks to an issue of social justice," Monico said. "I think David has actually been able to think about the psychological impact of that, not so much on every-body, but on the DACA students'

Monico believes the research is widespread and applicable to problems faced by DACA and first-generation

college students. "It's not just that we're looking at an impact on policy, supporting the efforts of to make a big deal about a research because it's reallyn about the fame of the research but the product that it a produce." Monico worked with De-

can to establish a procedure ensure the protection of perticipants' identities and elina research. "One of the things that

talked about early in them cess is precisely that he's going to put in danger to participants and if in anyw we believe that is happen we would pull back," Monie said. "He puts the safety du participants ahead of hism goals as a scholar which is of his career goals, and

noble in one word." Monico describes In can's demeanor and and tion to his research pe ticipants as authentic highly responsible. "He's very empathetic

people he's going to be interviewing which makes he much more prompt to actua ly establish rapport with the because he comes through an authentic perso Monico said.

Duncan emphasizes importance placed on comfortability of research participants. He highligh wanting to make sure thepe ticipants feel safe through the interview rather than a erced or used.

"A lot of researchers go talk to a population and he leave and never really com back to give them an m date on the research or for out what they're doing not Duncan said.

all of those who are trying to

get the DACA act passed, but

also at administrators at the college level to think about

how to better support DACA

students while they are at their universities and colleges," Monico said.

Protecting participant

One important aspect of Duncan's research is protect-ing the identities of the par-

ticipants. Duncan has been

working with the Institutional Review Board (IRB), a type of

committee that provides eth-

ical and regulatory oversight of research involving human

the identities of the partic-ipants are concealed at all times, even at the cost of the

research itself," Duncan said. 'That's why I've sort of kept

it to myself that I don't want

'I have to make sure that

identities

subjects.

Duncan hopes to provid a basis for other students build on his research after ward and continue delvin into this topic of the psych logical effects of immigration "If I could just sort of pre-

duce and publish and keep name out of it I would, Du-can said. "It's really just about how can we help these str dents because that's the moimportant part."

Monico believes Dunca character and the work he doing is important and wi have an impact on research the future.

"He's doing great thing I'm supporting him fully. In erything he's set to do he been able to do it. I think the he has passion for what he doing. He's going to go a los way," Monico said.