

8-4-2014

Governors State University Addictions Studies Professor Awarded for Innovation

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Recommended Citation

Office of Marketing and Communications, "Governors State University Addictions Studies Professor Awarded for Innovation" (2014).
Press Releases. Paper 5.
http://opus.govst.edu/press_releases/5

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From: [Gladstone, Lindsay](#)
Subject: Governors State University - Dr. Raven James Earns 2014 Fast Tracks Award
Date: Monday, August 04, 2014 11:50:41 AM
Attachments: [Raven James book.jpg](#)

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For Immediate Release
Image Attachment – Dr. Raven James

Governors State University Addictions Studies Professor Awarded for Innovation

University Park, IL, July 30, 2014 – Raven James, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Addictions Studies and Behavioral Health at Governors State University, earned the 2014 First Tracks Award for Innovation in Sexology from Honest Exchange, a sexuality education consulting firm based in New Jersey.

Dr. James, who joined GSU's Department of Addictions Studies and Behavioral Health in 2008, is a 2012 recipient of GSU's Faculty Excellence Award and author of *Sexuality and Addiction: Making Connections, Enhancing Recovery* (Praeger, 2012).

Honest Exchange President Melanie Davis selected Dr. James for the 2014 First Tracks Award in recognition of her cutting-edge work and commitment to making a difference in the lives of people challenged by substance abuse.

"The term 'first tracks' refers to the imprint made by someone who is the first to blaze a trail across new-fallen snow," said Davis. "I created the First Tracks Award in 2012 to recognize individuals or organizations in sexology who take creative approaches to problem solving and who turn their ideas into action."

Davis added, "The Sexual Health in Addiction Recovery Model (SHARM) that James developed and is testing reflects years of observation, data collection and research by James and other clinicians. It should trigger a fundamental shift in the field of substance abuse treatment through the development of evidence-based treatment approaches directed to the unique, gender-specific sexual health interventions," she said.

“It’s wonderful when others outside our College recognize the tremendous talent and commitment to excellence and innovation that Dr. James demonstrates in every aspect of her work,” said Cheryl Mejta, Professor and Chair of the Addictions Studies and Behavioral Health Department at GSU. “Our students, most assuredly, are lucky to have as fine a resource as Dr. James during their time in our program.”

Dr. James has been addressing the connection between sexual health esteem issues and addictions for more than 20 years, first as a clinician and then as a researcher. Through her work, Dr. James has observed how sexuality-related variables are often linked to why people use substances and/or relapse back into problematic use. Such variables include sexually transmitted infections and HIV, sexual behaviors, reproductive health, sexual dysfunction, sexual orientation, domestic violence, rape, incest and sexual assault.

Most recently, Dr. James presented the keynote address before more than 250 professionals at the Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse, held June 25-26, 2014, in Kansas City, MO. She just finished teaching a week-long “Sexuality and Addiction” class at Rutgers Summer School of Addiction Studies, at their New Brunswick, New Jersey campus. Dr. James is also teaching the Sexuality course here at GSU in Fall 2014 semester.

Dr. James is also the editor of the forthcoming *Encyclopedia of Sex and Sexuality* (Greenwood Publishers). She publishes in peer-reviewed journals and delivers lectures nationally and locally on sexuality, addiction and related topics. Dr. James will be presenting at the National Conference of Addictive Disorders (NCAD) in St. Louis this August, and at the National Association for Addiction Professionals (NAADAC) in Seattle this September.