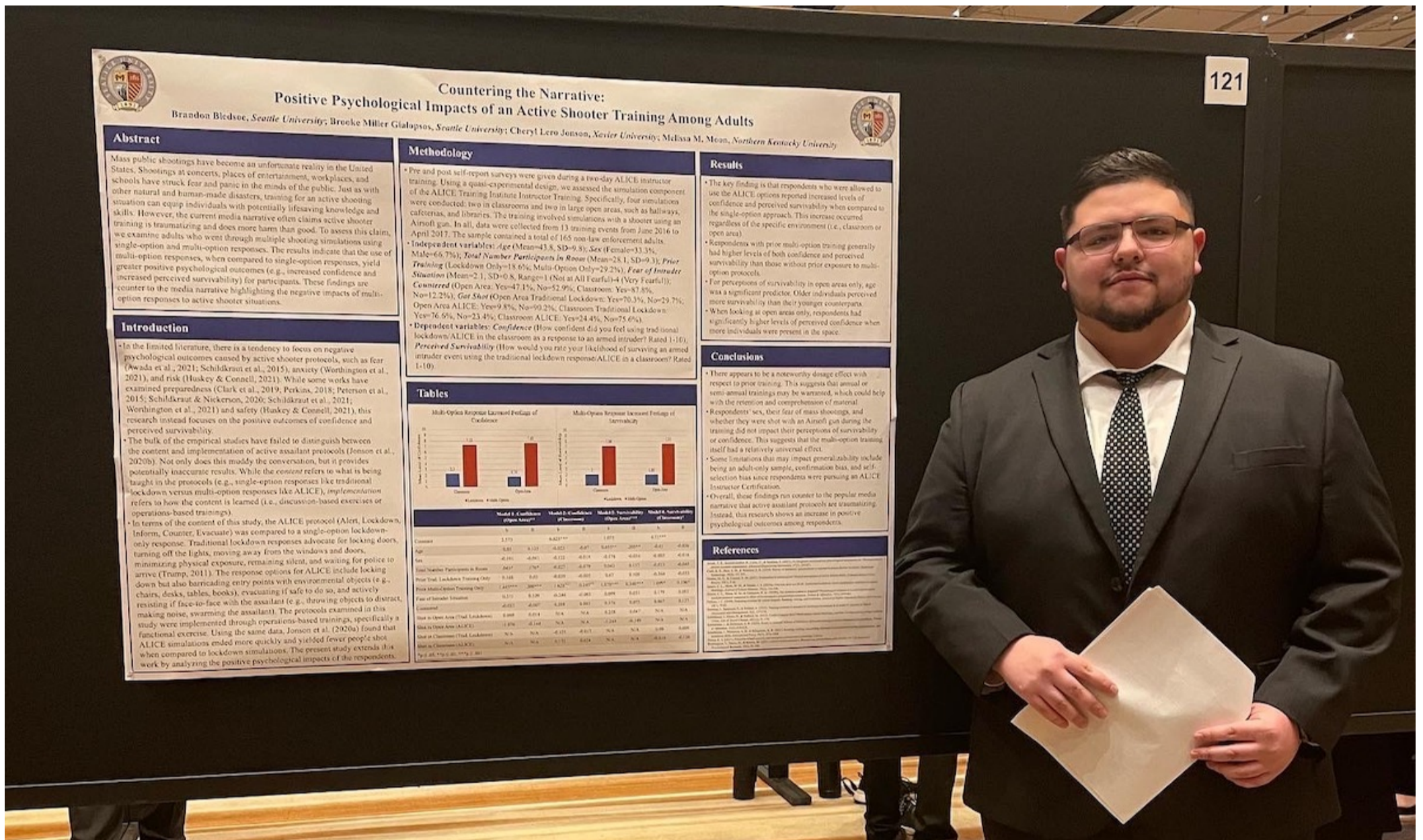


People of SU

Graduate Spotlight: Future Policy Maker Brandon Bledsoe

Written by Tara Lee

June 7, 2023



After earning a master’s in criminal justice, community policing and policy—and a PhD—in the sights of this 2023 graduate.

Brandon Bledsoe found his life’s purpose at Seattle University.

Following high school, Bledsoe didn’t have a clear direction. He started his college experience at Central Washington University, then transferred to Green River College and ultimately received his bachelor’s degree in psychology and criminal justice from the University of Washington, Tacoma. Bledsoe wanted to pursue a PhD but found that challenging with his limited experience. A natural next step was to enter a master’s program that provided him with a lot more than he originally expected.

“The unique thing about Seattle University is I felt supported throughout my time here by the entire Criminal Justice, Criminology and Forensics department. Everyone was instrumental to my development as a student and a professional,” says Bledsoe, who will receive his master’s in criminal justice at this year’s Commencement. “The classes were

incredibly stimulating and the professors offered me plenty of opportunities. I had a lot more opportunities here in the master's program than others I know had in PhD programs at other schools."

Many of those opportunities involved community policing. Through Professor Jacqueline Helfgott, PhD, director of SU's Crime and Justice Research Center, Bledsoe worked as a research analyst with the Seattle Police Department's Micro-Community Policing Plans research team. Bledsoe was assigned to work with SPD's South and Southwest precincts.

This work ignited a newfound passion in Bledsoe. "There is incredible value in working with members of the community and law enforcement. This is really the best way to improve public safety by bringing them together. Community members want reform and justice but are also concerned about crime increasing in their neighborhoods. Police officers struggle with not always being welcomed by the community but maintain a passion for keeping people safe. Community policing is incredibly important work and Seattle has been a unique place to study this."

In addition to Helfgott, Bledsoe credits criminal justice Associate Professor Brooke Gialopsos, PhD, and Elaine Gunnison, PhD, with his growth and development.

"They saw something in me in classes and became real advocates for me. They encouraged me to take leadership positions within the college as well. I am the president of the Arts and Sciences Graduate Council and vice president and treasurer of the Pi Delta Chapter of Alpha Phi Sigma," he says. Bledsoe was also hired as managing editor for the *Journal of Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law & Society*.

Before Bledsoe leaves Seattle University, he needs to defend his thesis, "Community Perceptions of Fear of Crime and Police Legitimacy in Seattle's Autonomous Zone: Implications for Community-Police Engagement." He is being honored with the College of Arts and Sciences Leadership and Professional Engagement Award and the 2023 Norm Maleng Academic Excellence and Citizenship Award through the Criminal Justice, Criminology and Forensics department.

A love of academia and research that started at Seattle University will carry Bledsoe into the next phase post-graduation. He was accepted at five of the six PhD programs he applied for and chose University of Cincinnati for his doctoral work where he received a graduate provost fellowship. The University of Cincinnati is in the top five among criminal justice programs in the country and will also provide Bledsoe the opportunity to pursue a second master's degree in addition to his PhD.

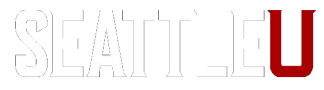
Through his doctoral program, Bledsoe will be paired with a mentor who works with the Cincinnati Police Department and the National Policing Institute.

Bledsoe plans to become an academic and credits a love of teaching and research to his interest in creating and informing policy. He has considered running for office to get policy solutions implemented.

"Everything at Seattle University seemed to fall perfectly into place for me. Through my studies and my work, I received a unique experience that gave me a lot of insight into how things work in both law enforcement and in academia," Bledsoe says. "In these two years, I have really grown as a student and learned a lot about myself in the process."

This is part of a series spotlighting SU graduates from the Class of 2023 who will be celebrated at the undergraduate and graduate Commencement ceremonies, June 12 at Climate Pledge Arena.





The Newsroom

901 12th Avenue

Seattle, WA 98122

206-296-6111

marcom2@seattleu.edu

seattleu.edu/newsroom/

[Terms of Service](#) [Privacy Policy](#) [Ethics Line](#) [Website Feedback](#) [Sitemap](#)

© Seattle University

