

I have the great pleasure of presenting this year's CHCPS Outstanding Graduate Student Award to **Laura Harder**, Master of Psychology. Many of you will remember Laura as the captain of Lakeville High School's dance team, class of 2004. She later graduated, with distinction, from the University of Minnesota where she was prestigiously dubbed a 'community engaged scholar'. Since she joined us in 2012, Laura has been an outstanding student in every respect; She is intelligent, dedicated, reflective and respectful. Laura has been described by my colleagues as “the BEST of our students at fusing together theory, method, AND application” and “among the top 5 graduates of our program.” She also happens to be one of the kindest, most humble and academically courageous students that I have had the pleasure to work with. She is, quite tritely, a pleasure to have in class and remarkably driven. To complement and augment her program of study at MSU, Laura actively sought out opportunities to learn outside of the classroom. She created an internship with the Center for Spirituality and Healing at the U of M; she worked as a program evaluator for a group, which runs resilience trainings for employees and organizations; and she served as the *only* student member of the Human Subjects Review Board at Metro State. Does she seem too good to be true? Well, there's more! Laura approached her Master's thesis with the same zeal that I imagine characterized her years on the Lakeville High dance team, with a bit of bounce in her step. And with a much admired bent toward asking important questions, gleaned from real life experience, with the aim of improving her community. Laura has said that her research “chose her.” In her previous employment, she managed staff, program administration, and client relations (including crisis support) for an organization, which provides services to families experiencing homelessness. She experienced, first hand, the stress that working with human beings can generate and the importance of cultivating supportive and engaging work arenas. Not surprisingly, her current work focuses on how we can build healthy relationships with our coworkers, clients, organization, and selves to live happier lives - in and out of work. She has done, what we hope most students will do – fashion their education to serve the good of the communities of which they are a part – and create a research program that they can be proud of. We will be sad to lose her voice in our classrooms, but grateful and proud to call her one of our alumni. Congratulations, Laura!