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Researcher Profile: An Interview with Virginia Solis Zuiker, Ph.D.

Virginia Solis Zuiker
University of Minnesota

Researcher Profile

An Interview with Virginia Solis Zuiker, Ph.D.

Virginia Solis Zuiker is an Associate Professor in the Department of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota. She teaches courses on personal and family finance, family financial counseling, family resource management, economic perspectives of families, and family decision-making. Her scholarly research focus is in the area of economic well-being of families with particular interest in self-employment and family-owned businesses. Her research focuses on the Hispanic family life and she is the author of "Hispanic Self-Employment in the Southwest: Rising Above the Threshold of Poverty," (Garland Publishing, 1997). She received her B.S. from the University of North Texas, an M.S. from Texas Tech University, and a Ph.D. from The Ohio State University. She served three years on the Board of Directors for the Association of Financial Counseling and Planning Education.

Q. Define what you do professionally.

A. I am an Associate Professor in the Department of Family Social Science at the University of Minnesota. I teach both undergraduate and graduate courses in my department and my scholarly research focuses on the economic perspective of the family. Most recently, I successfully passed the examination to become an Accredited Financial Counselor (AFC®) through the Association of Financial Counseling and Planning Education.

Q. What activities encompass your professional responsibilities?

A. As a faculty member of a land-grant university, my position allows me to generate new knowledge from my research endeavors and integrate this new knowledge into my teaching and outreach endeavors. Another important aspect of my professional life is my role as an advisor. My goal is to foster the growth of the students I advise as professionals and support them as they move from their role as a student to that of a professional.

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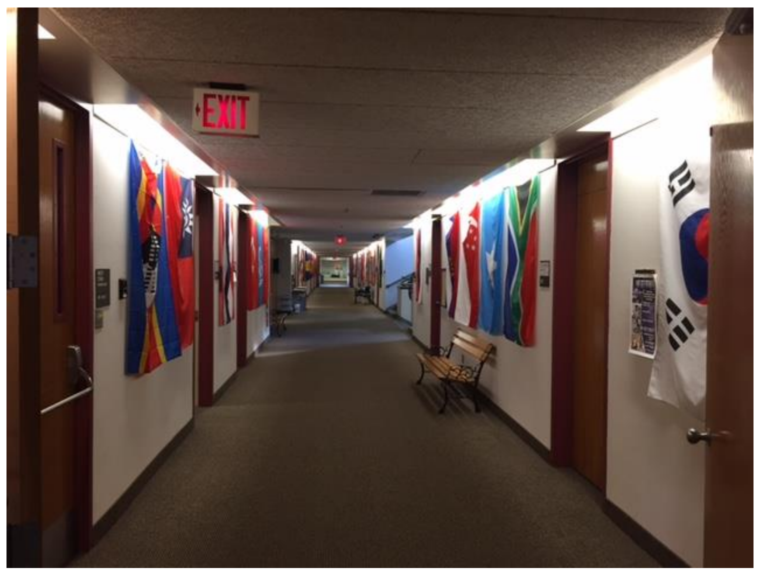
Q. How long have you been engaged in your professional activity?

A. I graduated from The Ohio State University in the Spring of 1997 and have been a faculty member at the University of Minnesota since the Fall of 1996. In a previous life, I was an Assistant State Specialist in Family and Consumer Economics with Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Prior to my extension years, I was a junior high school teacher in my hometown of Harlingen, Texas and a high school teacher with the Mercedes Independent School District in Mercedes, Texas.

Q. What led you to your professional calling?

A. I have always been interested in the economic perspective of the family. My mother was a secondary high school teacher in home economics and she was interested in the traditional subjects like food and nutrition and clothing and textiles. I, on the other hand, have always been interested in the money aspect of the family and how decisions are made with regards to money management.



Q. How are you compensated?

A. I am employed as a salaried nine-month faculty member. Every other summer I am typically given the opportunity to teach an online personal and family finance course.

Q. Do you work alone or do you have a team? Please explain.

A. It depends on the task at hand. I work with both undergraduate and graduate students in teaching and research. I also collaborate with the University of Minnesota Extension educators and colleagues from universities across the country on various research projects.

Q. What theoretical framework guides your work when dealing with clients and/or conducting research?

A. As a researcher and faculty member, I don't have clients. However, in my financial counseling course we cover the Transtheoretical Model of Behavioral Change and the financial counseling model. In my research, I have utilized a variety of theories and conceptual frameworks.

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Q. What needs to happen so that 10 years from now we can say that financial therapy is a respected field of study?

A. We need to figure out an affordable way to have researchers, educators, therapists, counselors, and financial professionals come together to listen and talk with each other and see how each entity can work together for the good of our clients, students, and society.

Q. What benefits can the Financial Therapy Association provide to others doing work that is similar to your professional activities?

A. Continuing to have annual conferences so that researchers, educators, therapists, counselors, and financial professionals have a space to collaborate and have a dialogue with each other. Also, in order to bring in the next generations to the annual meetings, we need to do our best to keep costs down so that we can attract students to come to these annual events. Without them, we have no future.

Q. If others are interested in finding out more about you personally and professionally, where can they obtain this information?

A. Readers can also learn more about my department Family Social Science at http://www.cehd.umn.edu/FSoS/.

The best way to reach me is via email at vzuiker@umn.edu.

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