As the end of the academic year draws closer, I find myself once again reflecting on the many accomplishments of the students and the faculty of the Psychology Department. This year, Dr. Phyllis Anastasio has been recognized for the long-term excellence of her pedagogy. Our own ‘Dr. A’ received this year’s prestigious Lindback Award in recognition of the high quality of her classroom instruction.

Our students have also been recognized for their academic achievements. Ms. Stephanie Scalise, one of our seniors graduating from the College of Arts and Sciences, received this year’s Henrik S. Arnesen Award. This award was given to Stephanie in recognition of her excellence in academics and in many venues of service to others during her years at Saint Joseph’s. One of our seniors graduating from the College of Professional and Liberal Studies, Mr. Ryan Routledge, received the Psychology Award in recognition of the excellence of his academics during his years at Saint Joseph’s.

The Psychology Department continues to grow and change. Dr. Elizabeth Becker, a neuroscientist who joined the Psychology faculty at the beginning of this academic year, is completing a very successful two semesters with us. In the fall, you will be seeing a new face in Post Hall, that of Dr. Clare Conry-Murray. Dr. Conry-Murray (NOT to be confused with either Psychology’s administrative assistant, Mrs. Clare McAneny, or with our Dr. Catherine Murray) is a developmental psychologist whose field of expertise is the development of moral decision-making in children. Dr. Conry-Murray joins us after teaching for a number of years at the Pennsylvania State University’s Beaver County campus. A seasoned teacher and a productive scholar, we are looking forward to the contributions that Dr. Conry-Murray will make to the Psychology Department here at Saint Joseph’s.

-Donald S. Leitner, Ph.D.
Alum Profile: Brandon Perelman (MS ’12)

My name is Brandon Perelman and I am an SJU alumnus of the MS program in experimental psychology, an employee at Applied Research Associates, Inc. (ARA), and doctoral student in the applied cognitive science and human factors program at Michigan Technological University (MTU) in Houghton, MI. This means that I have yet to escape grad school. That said, I am learning more, working harder, making more money, and enjoying life more than ever before. Hopefully the rest of this write-up will convince those of you in the psychology field to consider continuing education and/or pursuing a career in applied psychology.

Psychology research can be divided into two subdomains: basic psychology, which seeks to gain a better understanding of psychology for the sake of science, and applied psychology, which investigates psychological phenomena for specific purposes, such as marketing, defense, and medicine. As an infantry veteran, I have always been interested in defense-related psychology research, so applied science was a solid fit. Of course, this is easy to say in retrospect. Luckily, a series of fortuitous events led me to MTU’s applied program.

The first event that brought me here was the complete lack of interest, on the part of basic psychology professors, in lie detection, which was my area of interest at the time. The second event, my contact professor’s lack of funding for a graduate student, nearly torpedoed our relationship before it even began. I could not accept an offer to attend without a guarantee of funding, and communicated this to my prospective mentor. A few weeks later I received an e-mail, from another professor in the program, explaining his lab’s research in defense-related computational modeling. I asked to begin work prior to the beginning of the next semester.

The final event, running off to MI before the semester had even started, landed me a job. In order to secure funding, my advisor engineered my employ with ARA for the summer. This professional relationship has continued until present day in a part-time capacity. I worked on a number of projects, including a computational modeling project for the US Air Force, training for US Army soldiers, and training for intelligence analysts. Over the summer, I learned a great deal about computer programming in R and PEBL (I had never programmed anything before – it is a very valuable skill to have, and ARA will occasionally call me for programming work), and the projects formed the basis for my research at MTU.

Our current work involves applying biologically inspired neural networks to unmanned aerial navigation. The hippocampus, it is often taught, is responsible for memory consolidation and retrieval. At the computational level, the hippocampus facilitates the completion of item sequences. In episodic memory, items may be considered events that, when properly ordered, describe the episode chronologically. In the case of navigation, each item in the sequence is a distinct context in the environment as perceived by the organism. The architecture of the hippocampus itself is a multilayer network of pyramidal cells, and *cornu ammonis* layers 1 (CA1) and 3 (CA3) are believed to contain the bulk of what are often called “place cells.” Interconnectivity in CA1 and CA3 often forms the basis for neurocomputational models of the hippocampus. Neural networks are created in computer programs, such as R or MATLAB, and used to study behaviors such as episodic memory retrieval, problem solving, and navigation. Until recently, these models have only been used to study rodent navigation. We have more recently used them to model soldiers’ behavior during cordon and search operations in urban terrain, and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles for wilderness search and rescue.

It has been a very busy year. So far, my advisor and I have published four papers in academic journals and conference proceedings, presented two posters, published a data analysis package for the R statistical computing language, built two web sites, programmed and distributed a flight simulator, and presented at multiple conferences within and outside the US.

Of course, it’s not all rainbows and sunshine! MTU is located in what I believe to be the least habitable place in the US mainland: Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The area is one of the snowiest places in the US, averaging over 220 inches per year (annual average snowfall in Philadelphia is around 22”). The location is very remote; the nearest Target is a two hour drive. That said, the environment provides great incentive for flying off to attend conferences!
Faculty Profile: Dr. Philip Schatz

Dr. Philip Schatz joined the Psychology Department faculty in 1998, having completed academic and clinical training in neuropsychology with expertise in traumatic brain injury. Fully expecting to pursue a line of research on outcome following brain injury, Dr. Schatz found himself working on a distant learning course in the area of mild TBI, and thought this would be a good opportunity to engage graduate students in research. Unaware that this would soon become a topic of daily discussion in the paper (or that people would one day read their daily news on the internet), Dr. Schatz began "baseline" testing athletes at SJU in 1999, the same time companies were developing commercial software products for the assessment and management of sports-related concussion. With colleagues at Drexel and Temple, they started the Philadelphia Sports Concussion Project, which involved collaborative research between the three schools, and supported student theses and dissertations. Flash-forward 14 years, and in addition to having more children and less hair, Dr. Schatz has published extensively on the cognitive tests used for the assessment of sports-related concussion, as well as factors effecting outcome following concussion. Most recently, he has begun a line of research validating iPad-based concussion assessment apps.

Dr. Schatz received his B.S. from Penn State University and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Drexel University. He is starting his 15th year at Saint Joe's, and lives in Wynnewood with his wife and two sons.

Upcoming Conferences & Events:

- 121st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association: July 31- August 4, 2013: Honolulu, HI
- 25th Annual Convention of the Association for Psychological Science: May 23-26, 2013: Washington, DC
- 2013 Annual Meeting of the Psychonomic Society: November 14-17, 2013: Toronto, Ontario, Canada
- 50th Annual Meeting of the Animal Behavior Society: July 28-August 1, 2013: Boulder, CO
- Association for Behavior and Cognitive Therapies: November 21-24, 2013: Nashville, TN
- Annual meeting of the Society for Neuroscience: November 9-13, 2013: San Diego, CA

Congratulations to the 2013 Psi Chi (International Honor Society in Psychology) Inductees

Thomas Bernardo, Rachel Butler, Melissa Ehrlichman, Laken Ethun, Elizabeth Harders, Nicholas Hoell, Kelly Larson, Jennifer Lester, Katherine Messina, Myrline Michel, Gloria Park, Marcela Pavon, Caitlin Rothwell, Monique Uy, Elizabeth Villanyi

Congratulations to the 2013 Sigma Xi (the Scientific Research Society) Inductees from Psychology

Dr. Elizabeth Becker, Katherine Bascom, Thomas Bernardo, Mamatha Chary, Jayson Cruz, Jacqueline Foster, Jennifer Lester, Douglas MacDonald, Rebecca McCulloch, David Pagnotti, Mikaela Pricher, Patrick Reeves, Stephanie Scalise, Sara Shaw, Michael Stephenson
Alumni Notes:

Maureen Carrigan (BS ’91) earned a PhD in Clinical Psychology from the State University of New York at Binghamton and is presently Professor of Psychology at the University of South Carolina Aiken. She has just been awarded a 2013 Carolina Trustee Professorship Award in recognition of a record of teaching excellence and outstanding performance in research and in public service and outreach activities.

Jenna Dragani (BS ’08, MS ’11) has been accepted into the MS Educational Specialist Degree in School Psychology program at Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine.

Justin McGraw (MS ’12) has been accepted into the Neural and Cognitive Sciences PhD program at Bowling Green State University.

Are you a graduate of the SJU Psychology BS or MS programs? We would love to hear from you and share your news with others in Alumni Notes. Please direct your news and updates to Dr. Matthew Anderson at mander06@sju.edu. Be sure to indicate the year you graduated and which program you were enrolled in. If you would like to prepare a longer ‘Alum Profile” we would be happy to consider it for inclusion as well.

Other News:

• Dr. Phyllis Anastasio has been awarded the Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching.

• Tenure News: Dr. Alexander Skolnick and Dr. Patrick Garrigan have been awarded tenure.

• Dr. Patrick Garrigan has been promoted to the rank of Associate Professor.

• Matthew Barstead is the recipient of this year’s Graduate Psychology Award.

• Alicia Peluso placed 9th in the EPAGS (Eastern Psychological Association of Graduate Students) Annual Poster Competition at this year’s Eastern Psychological Association conference.

Recent Publications:


