Article from Psi Chi Advisor:

Dr. Deborah Garfin

Due to the hard work of Psi Chi’s executive board, we will end this semester with more programming than ever before! We will have sponsored two GRE practice sessions (in January and March), the first presentation in our Distinguished Speakers series by Dr. Paul Earley, a Preparing for Graduate School Panel scheduled for April 6, and our Induction and General Meeting taking place March 25. We are honored to have Dr. Tricia King speak at our induction ceremony where we will be initiating 50 new members. Finally, we have again managed to publish another issue of Gray Matters.

At GSURC this year, we had 17 poster presentations from psychology majors. Each project was sponsored by a faculty member. Thanks to all of the faculty who facilitated this opportunity for our students to showcase their work and obtain valuable feedback. Thanks also to the 8 faculty members who served as judges for this conference. We are all quite proud that the winner of this year’s University Faculty Award for Undergraduate Research went to our own Dr. Tracie Stewart. As recipient of this award, Dr. Stewart gave the keynote address at GSURC. Her talk, “The audacity of undergraduate research: Student contributions to the psychology of stereotyping and prejudice,” was extremely informative, inspiring, and entertaining!
continue to offer sections of Psyc 3030 through Spring 2010. Psyc 3010 will not count as a prerequisite for Psyc 3530, so students who have already taken Psyc 3010 are encouraged to take Psyc 3030 as soon as possible.

Psyc 3510 and Psyc 3530 will count the same as Psyc 3010 and Psyc 3030 for degree requirements and 4000-level course prerequisites.

Please contact the Psychology department advisors or the Director of Undergraduate Studies with any questions about the transition to this new course sequence.

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**Getting Into and Surviving Graduate School**

*Renee Burgess*

I know, being an undergraduate looking at grad schools, that the search for the perfect graduate program can be an insurmountable task. John Ryan, a graduate student at Georgia State, offered to help me find the answers. He is graduating in May with his PhD in Neuropsychology and Behavioral Neuroscience. He gave me two hours of his time, in which to share his experiences about applying to graduate school.

*Renee:* Did you go to graduate school right after you graduated?

*John:* No! I took time off between, mostly because I had no idea what I wanted to study in graduate school. Which I guess would be my first big tip having to do with grad school: take time off especially if you do not know what you want to study, or are just a little burned out on school.

*Renee:* What did you do with your time off?

*John:* I took 2 years off, and I worked full time in a psychology research lab.

*Renee:* How did you find this job?

*John:* I found it through talking to my undergraduate advisor. I applied along with another student. When we were interviewed we were asked which lab we would like to work in, either the Neuropsychology lab or the physiological EEG lab. The other applicant had said they would prefer the Neuropsychology lab, so I went with the EEG lab.

*Renee:* Did you like your position?

*John:* It was interesting and taught me a new set of skills. While I was working there I started to figure out what I was interested in and an idea of what I wanted to study in grad school, which was awesome because I had no idea when I graduated from undergrad.

*Renee:* So how did you go about finding a school and program you were interested in for graduate school?

*John:* First I figured out what I wanted to study, then I did some research to find out who does that research. I knew I wanted to do Psychophysiology (which is recording how the body responds to psychological stimuli) and Social Psychology. So my first step was finding out who does this research, and lo and behold only about a few people in the country were -- one was right here at Georgia State.

*Renee:* Did you apply to all the programs?

*John:* First you have to know that in most cases you don’t ‘apply to a program’ you apply to a person. In many programs, faculty have to take turns bringing in students to their program, so you want to find the people who are doing your research and email them and ask if they are taking students that year. The last thing you want to do is spend $100.00 on an application fee that is useless! Another reason it is good to email the professor is because it puts your name in their head. Then, after you have sent in your application, write back and let them know you have applied. They will hopefully write your name down and look in the piles of files for your application.

*Renee:* So, what should/do you want to be in the file?

*John:* Inside your file are your transcript, vita, letters of recommendation, and your personal statement about your interest in research and your plans for graduate school and your career. One big key to your statement is to include something along the lines of: “I am interested in studying at Insert School because Insert Professor is doing Insert Specific Research
"Project." To find out all this information, look up the professor and read their papers and publications and mention them in the statement.

Renee: What happens after they read the file?
John: If all this information is in your statement, you have decent GRE scores, and you have a good GPA and recommendations you hope for the best! You also want to apply to as many schools as possible because you will get rejected from some schools. Most applicants apply to over 10 schools – you want to cast a wide net.

Renee: How many of the schools you applied to accepted you?
John: I applied to 9 schools, and was accepted to 2.
Renee: Obviously Georgia State was one of the schools, but was it your first choice?
John: Believe it or not, Georgia State was my last choice and the other school that offered me a position was my first choice!
Renee: Then if Georgia State was your last choice, how did you end up here?
John: Never decide whether or not to go to a school without seeing it! You have to spend the next six years of your life there, so make sure there is chemistry with the school, students, professors, and advisors. I went to my first choice school and I really didn’t like the city, the campus, or many of the students. Georgia State did not have the funds to fly me down here for an interview so the interview was over the phone. I decided to fly myself down to Atlanta on my own dime. My advisor set up a whole day of appointments and interviews; he cleared his schedule just to make time for me. This was already better then the other school.

Renee: What has kept you going since your first day here, what has made you keep your finger off the ‘I Quit’ button?
John: Let me start this off by saying, out of the 20 students that started with me, I think only about ten are still here. What kept me going I guess is my threshold to put up with the downfalls and setbacks. You also have to love what you are doing. Another thing to consider is if you hate statistics and research methods, you may want to consider that a research Ph.D. program may not be for you – grad school is a lot of designing experiments and doing statistics!

Renee: So, you are saying if I don’t like math or research grad school just shouldn’t be on my mind?
John: No, but there are many options to become a Psychologist other than getting a Ph.D. For example, you may want to look into Psy.D. programs, which do not have as much research and stats. Or you could look at a masters degree in counseling.

Renee: What is grad school like for those of us who want to get a PhD?
John: The first two years are very different from undergraduate, you spend them taking classes which are rather difficult and you work on your thesis. In your 3rd-4th year (after you have your M.A) you are finished with classes, and you are taking your prelims, which is like an 8 hour essay exam to see if you know enough about Psychology. If you pass prelims, you then come up with a dissertation topic. It takes a year or two to complete the dissertation, during which time you’re also looking for jobs.

To reiterate John’s tips:
1. Take time off, especially if you don’t know what you want to do.
2. Find what you are interested in studying/researching.
3. Research who does this work, where they do this work, and then apply to those programs.
4. Email the professor to get your name in their head.
5. Apply to at least 10 schools to maximize your chances.
6. Never decide to go to a school without seeing it! Chemistry is a big part of your decision.

Distinguished Speaker: Dr. Earley on Addictive Processes

Claire Lisco

Dr. Paul Earley, the distinguished speaker for Psi Chi this semester, spoke about addictive processes in his presentation entitled,
“Neurochemistry of Addiction and The Hope of New Medications”. Dr. Earley training is in neurology and he is now the medical director of Talbott Recovery Campus. Dr. Earley is a charismatic presenter with a humorous side, which allowed for a very interesting and fun, yet educational experience.

His speech centered on the neural circuitry involved with each stage of the addiction experience. He began by explaining the major addicting molecules, which are nicotine, cocaine, alcohol, and heroin. All of the molecules look very different, yet they produce the same stereotypic behavior in addicted individuals, one of which is associative cue learning.

Dr. Earley described the progression from impulse to compulsive drug use, which begins as abuse and may result in addiction. Addiction is characterized by the presentation of a cycle, which goes from the acute reinforcing stage (i.e. intoxication) to the withdrawal/negative affect stage to the preoccupation/anticipation stage. The preoccupation/anticipation stage is characterized by consuming thoughts and relapse, which usually takes an individual back to the beginning stage of acute reinforcement. Dr. Earley described this cycle as the “ever downward spiral that defines addiction” and gave two important steps for educating addicted individuals. The first step is to help the individual look where they are in the cycle. The second step is to help the individual look at him/herself as a whole.

Dr. Earley defined the acute reinforcing stage as involving the mesolimbic dopamine system, which is also known as the rewards pathway. The brain’s reward pathways are the nucleus accumbens and the ventral tegmental area, through which addiction may occur if the drug stimulates these systems. Dr. Earley provided a few examples of how this works. One example explained how cocaine (a stimulus drug) blocks the reuptake of dopamine and the reward experience is exaggerated.

After explaining how the brain is involved in the addiction process, he described the importance of knowing about neural circuits and neurotransmitters in order to research what medications will work as blocking agents to improve the addictive hunger people have in early recovery stages. He explained that this craving has two parts. The learning component involves building new wiring to recall and re-enact past experiences and behaviors. For example, an individual addicted to alcohol may have a reflexive response to have alcohol after a fight with his or her spouse. The second component is sensitization, which involves enhancing sensitivity of existing circuitry.

The second stage in the addiction cycle, the withdrawal/negative affect stage, includes symptoms of chronic irritability, emotional pain, malaise, dysphoria, alexithymia (e.g. the inability to know or name feelings), and the loss of motivation for natural rewards. The final stage in the cycle, the preoccupation/anticipation stage, involves a shift from seemingly normal functioning to preoccupation, anticipation, euphoric recall, place seeking, sympathetic nervous system excitation, and goal seeking behaviors.

Dr. Earley proposes that the most effective treatment for addicted individuals is an abstinence-based treatment, which may be paired with nonaddicting medication. Overall, Dr. Earley’s speech was extremely fascinating. More information about his work and the program he is involved in can be found on his website: www.paulearley.net

Getting Involved in Practicum

Glenna Read

Practicum is an opportunity for psychology students to get involved with research (Psych 4760) or in an applied setting (Psych 4770) for 1-3 hours of course credit. To become involved in a practicum a student must be a psychology major of sophomore year or higher standing, have an overall minimum GPA of 2.5, have a psychology GPA of 3.0 or higher, and have completed Psych 3110 (Interpersonal Behavior) with a grade of C or above. To become involved in a
practicum a student should follow these steps (also listed on the website: http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwpsy/undergrad/PracticumGeneralInfo.htm):

1. Make an appointment with the Psychology Undergraduate Advisement Office to discuss academic standing and check that prerequisites have been met.

2. Ask for a sign-up sheet from the reception desk on the 11th floor of Urban Life.

3. Decide on an applied (www.gsu.edu/~wwwpug/AppliedPracticaSites.htm) or research practicum (www.gsu.edu/~wwwpug/ResearchPracticaSites.htm) by visiting the websites.

4. At the meeting, bring a current PACE (Academic Evaluation) form. The advisor will assign two places to interview. At the end of the session, students will receive an application form.

5. After students have completed the application and interviewed with potential practicum sites, they should leave their application at the reception desk of the 11th floor of Urban Life.

6. Students will be contacted at their student email accounts and will then be able to register for the practicum online.

Practicum is an invaluable experience for students considering applying to graduate school and pursuing a career in the field of psychology. Not only can students develop relationships with professors, they can explore and refine their interests.

Professor Spotlight

Emily Andrews

Dr. Kelly M. Lewis joined the Georgia State University psychology department in August of 2008, as an Assistant Professor in the clinical-community program. Currently, she teaches Introduction to African American Psychology as well as supervises clinical and clinical-community graduate students in their clinical practicum work. She is also actively involved in developing her research program that focuses on empowerment implementation research. Prior to this appointment, Dr. Lewis served as a project director for the Applied Sciences Branch of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention on an initiative entitled “Promoting Science Based Approaches Using Getting to Outcomes”, which developed the capacity of state, regional and national programs to design, implement, and evaluate their own programs with quality. Before coming to CDC, Dr. Lewis was a senior research faculty member at Emory University, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania where she taught classes, mentored students and conducted programmatic research on skin bleaching in order to better understand and address this phenomenon through effective programming.

A common theme of her research is empowerment implementation programs for under-represented populations, in particular African Americans and other under-served populations in the United States, the Caribbean and Africa. Essentially, her research is primarily concerned with the design, implementation and evaluation of empowerment programs, across a variety of topic domains including education, public health and leadership.

Dr. Lewis is currently working on two main research projects investigating empowerment implementation. The first is the adaptation and replication of a school-based emancipatory intervention program entitled Project EXCEL (Ensuring eXcellence through Communalism, African Education and Leadership) that Dr. Lewis designed, implemented, and evaluated in her earlier work. Specifically, she is interested in replicating
this school based intervention in Atlanta area schools and adapting it for other nations affected with high levels of school drop out and delinquency among middle school students of color. This work is being conducted in collaboration with Dr. Joyce King of the department of Educational Policy Studies in the College of Education. Project EXCEL is based on certain elements of East African Ujamaa philosophy and was initially developed to promote the psychological and behavioral well-being of African- American adolescents in US public schools by integrating African/African American history, team building, leadership activities such as dance, music, African rituals, and hip hop back into the mainstream curriculum to get youth excited about learning. Currently, the possibilities of adapting the program for public schools in the US Virgin Islands, as well as the addition of an educational component for teachers called Teachers EXCEL are being considered.

Dr. Lewis’s clinical philosophy is consistent with her research interests. She specializes in multicultural and interpersonal approaches to therapy. In her own words, “I believe strongly in facilitating individual and systems level change simultaneously within a context that is empowering, culturally sensitive, interpersonal, strength-based and supportive of the cultural world view of those I work with.”

Welcome Dr. Lewis!

Caminar Latino

Emily Andrews

Caminar Latino means Latino Journey in Spanish. It began at the request of a concerned nun as a support group for Latina women who were dealing with domestic violence issues. The women have remained the core of Caminar Latino. Over the years it has developed into a unique program to better serve the specific needs of the women. Caminar has emphasized above all the human rights of the women and their children. Cultivating an awareness and respect for these rights has been central to its mission.

A small group of women began meeting regularly in 1990. The initial meetings consisted of the women sitting in a circle with their children in the center as they talked. The women began to be concerned about the effects that this may have on their children and decided that it was best for their children to be separate. This was the beginning of a babysitting service, which eventually developed into a comprehensive children’s program. The children’s program now consists of a playgroup for the babies and younger children, a 4-7 year old group, an 8-12 year old group and an adolescent group (each with their own culturally sensitive and age appropriate curriculum). The growth of the children’s program led to the need for volunteers, which were introduced to the program in 1994. The volunteers have become an integral part of Caminar.

In 1995, also at the request of the women, a men’s intervention group was added on to the program. A majority of the Caminar Latino women participants had remained with their partners and felt that the only way to progress was for their partners to also receive treatment. Caminar Latino has since evolved to include two women’s support groups, two men’s intervention groups, a comprehensive children’s program, substance use treatment groups, and, more recently, parenting classes. It has developed into a program which simultaneously treats the whole family, thus keeping consistent with the values of the Latino community which it serves. Caminar Latino became a non-profit organization in 2004.
Caminar has always highly valued not only the voices of the women, but also the voices of all its participants. Foundational to Caminar’s approach is the belief that the participants are the real experts on their own problems and that it is essential to work with them in order to develop an accurate understanding of their situation, as well as to come up with an effective intervention. Consistent with these values, Georgia State graduate students have been conducting Participatory Action Research (PAR) with the adolescent group. PAR actively involves the population, which it is studying in every step of the research process, including the development of hypotheses, measures and the interpretation of results. Last semester the adolescents presented their research findings at a conference on children who witness domestic violence, which was sponsored by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, as well as at several other conferences including the New York State Regional Forums in New York City. The youth are currently investigating the incidence of domestic violence across generations.

Caminar is always willing to take in new volunteers who are interested in their organization, yet you must be willing to make at least a six month commitment in order to become a volunteer. Those who are interested can e-mail Jessica Nunan at info@caminarlatino.org.

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**Refining Research Interests**

*Emily Andrews*

I recently interviewed Louis Chow, a graduate student in the clinical psychology program, in order to learn about the process of identifying specific research interests. This is a process many graduate school bound psychology students go through. It involves self-reflection in order to identify ones values, desires and strengths. Through the interview, I learned that there is no definite path through this process. No specific sequence of steps lead to success—there is much individual variability in this process. My intention in writing this article is to share the journey of one graduate student so that others may learn from his experiences, as well as the wisdom one obtains through retrospection.

Louis attended Louisiana State University, where he majored in psychology, with a minor in Asian American Studies. Early in his undergraduate career, he had the intention of attending medical school and becoming a doctor. During his time at LSU, he became interested in social justice issues, in particular, disparities in health care treatment and knowledge between certain populations. He initially planned to address this problem as a doctor, but later became interested in psychology’s approach. He was intrigued by the tremendous
effect that one person could have on another’s quality of life by providing a supportive and open environment in which to both discuss problems and learn new ways of perceiving and coping with them.

During Louis’ senior year of college, he applied and was accepted to several clinical psychology graduate programs. However, he decided that he was not sufficiently confident about his choice of career to commit to a doctoral program. He remained interested in disparities in healthcare but was still not certain which approach he was best suited for and most interested in. At this point, he also became interested in public health and its policy level approach to addressing problems in the health care system. In order to gain some experience and training in clinical methods, as well as to pursue his own interests, he began to work in a suicide prevention center. Working at the clinic gave him first-hand experience with some of the duties of a clinician, as well as the rewarding nature of the client-therapist relationship. His work at the clinic was influential in his later decision to become a clinical psychologist. During this time he also learned more about the public health field.

After two years he once again applied to graduate programs, this time to both clinical and public health programs. He ultimately decided on the clinical program at Georgia State, because of the department’s training model and his interest in the work of Dr. Lisa Armistead, whose research focuses on the impact of HIV on families as well as effective family-based strategies for decreasing its prevalence.

One can see throughout Louis’ story how his interests were shaped based on his experiences. What can Louis’ experiences teach other psychology students? First of all, this process has no determined length and cannot necessarily be sped up. That is to say, the process looks different for each individual, taking varying amounts of time. Taking time off before applying to graduate school may be helpful in order assess one’s core values. For those who are even a little bit uncertain, it can be helpful to determine, based on their values, what exactly they are looking for in a graduate program and future career. Finally, it is critical to be proactive in this process. As has been demonstrated in this article, experiences, which help one to determine their interests, are essential in facilitating the process of discovery.

Psi Chi Grants and Scholarships

Renee Burgess

As many of you, I am always on the lookout for ways to fund graduate school, research projects, and really life in general. I had not even considered PSI CHI a place to look for this funding, and I had no idea why. PSI CHI offers so many opportunities for grants and scholarships not only for school but a wide variety of funding for all sorts of research projects. There are so many different awards that it would take this whole newsletter to describe them all. You can look at the various grants and scholarships offered by PSI CHI at http://www.psichi.org/awards/data_sheet.asp or www.psichi.org for more information. This website also explains all about PSI CHI and the unique opportunities that are open to its members.

Making the Most of your Undergraduate Experience

Jennifer Natbony

When I first transferred to Georgia State University from a small private college, I felt lost because of how large the university seemed. I had no idea what Georgia State had to offer. I spent the first year going to class and making good grades. At the time, I really believed that this was all I needed to do. Once I discovered the necessity and value of participating in activities...
outside of the classroom, I was able to discover and further develop my talents and skills. These experiences solidified my decision to go to graduate school.

I encountered my first opportunity for extracurricular involvement at the Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference (PURC). One of my professors announced the event in class and made it seem like something all psychology majors should attend. At the conference I learned about opportunities to get involved and how to take advantage of all that GSU has to offer. This experience prompted me to become involved in a research lab. Working in a lab provided me with valuable research experience, as well as the opportunity to present my own research at future conferences. Another benefit was the opportunity to work with graduate students, which allowed me to ask many questions about what I should be doing as an undergraduate and their perspective on different graduate schools and PhD programs. Speaking with graduate students dramatically improved my networking skills and helped me to figure out the actions necessary to attain my academic goals.

Building relationships with graduate students as well as professors has been an incredibly valuable experience. Not only do these relationships provide me with excellent letters of recommendations, they also provide me with mentors. They have helped me to further develop and focus my interests and to establish my post graduation plans. I had always planned to take a year off and travel after graduation, but was unsure if it was an acceptable reason to put off going to graduate school. By speaking with professors with whom I had built relationships, I was able to see the value of living abroad and learning another language. I have since attended several career fairs and Majors Matters workshops and have begun meeting with a career counselor who has helped me to begin to put my aspirations into action.

Becoming more involved has helped me to identify my interests and future career goals. Participation in extracurricular activities, such as research experience, career services and student organizations, has helped to shape me into the person I am today. I am grateful for the experiences and opportunities that GSU has given me. I highly encourage all students to get involved outside of the classroom in order to make the most of their time here at GSU.

Psi Chi Spring Induction

Psi Chi holds its spring induction on Wednesday, March 25, 2009 from 5:00 to 6:30 Pm in room 480 of the University Center. The speaker is Dr. Tricia King. Fifty new members are being inducted. This is the largest group of Psi Chi inductees in over five years!

Special Announcement

Dr. Beverly Tatum, President of Spelman College, will speak at a program sponsored by the GSU Department of Psychology and the American Psychological Association. Dr. Tatum is widely recognized as a scholar, teacher, and race relations expert and leader in higher education. A clinical psychologist by training, her areas of research include racial identity development, and the role of race in the classroom.

Friday, March 27, 2009
3:00-4:00 pm
Reception: 4-5 pm
2nd Floor Lobby
Urban Life
The 5 W’s of Psychology Programs Offered at Georgia State

Claire Lisco

Who? Faculty Interests for the five programs
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/FacInterests.htm

What? The five programs with brief descriptions
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/Programs.htm

When? The what, when, where and how to apply
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/HowToApply.htm

Where? The Community, The University, The environment
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/Environment.htm

Why Georgia State University? Georgia State’s emphasis on diversity
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/Diversity.htm

Why research this information? Get ahead in your application process, and take a look at the statistics associated with applicants in the past to get a feel of how competitive the program you seek is. Compare GSU with other programs you are interested in, and most importantly, just start the process!
http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/Statistics.htm

Calendar of Events

February 18: 5:00-6:15 pm
Dr. Paul Earley
Neurobiology of Addiction
1199 Urban Life

March 25: 5:00-6:30 pm
Spring Induction and General Meeting
480 University Center

March 31: 4:00-5:30 pm
Practice GRE Session
218 GCB
Register: dgarfin@gsu.edu
(type “GRE” in the Subject line)

April 6: 4:00-6:00 pm
Graduate School Panel
1199 Urban Life

For information on Psi Chi and how to join visit http://www2.gsu.edu/~7EwWwpsy/undergrad/PsiChi.htm

To access previous editions of Gray Matters visit http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwpsy/Newsletters.htm
ACROSS
2 _______ is a model that combines three of the psychological models
4 The study of human psychological functioning and behavior
6 A form of associative learning that was first demonstrated by Ivan Pavlov
7 The modification of "voluntary behavior"
8 _______ is focusing on the development of the human mind through the life span
10 The study of the process of thought
11 _______ is the scientific study of the biological bases of behavior and mental states
12 _______ is the study of abnormal behavior in order to describe, predict, explain, and change abnormal patterns of functioning
13 _______ includes the study and application of psychology for the purpose of understanding, preventing, and relieving psychologically-based distress or dysfunction
14 Rorschach and T.A.T

DOWN
1 Unconscious redirection of feelings for one person to another
3 Carl Rogers was a _______
5 _______ covers a broad range of practices primarily involving clinical evaluations of defendants, reports to judges and attorneys, and courtroom testimony on given issues
9 Branch of psychology that studies individual differences

Created by Renee Burgess