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Gray Matters

Psi Chi's Undergraduate Newsletter for Psychology Majors

Greetings from Psi Chi Advisor:

Dr. Deborah Garfin

This has been an eventful and rewarding year for Psi Chi. We inducted 70 new members during Fall and Spring semesters. With the psychology department, we cosponsored the Practicum Fair and PURC (Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference) in October and November. Thanks to all our members who helped make these projects an overwhelming success. PURC and the Practicum Fair are annual events that occur each Fall semester. Look for emails during the early part of Fall semester 2008 to volunteer your time for these exciting and valuable programs.

In order to publicize our organization, members set up a table in the Plaza during both Fall and Spring semesters. This gave us an opportunity to speak with undergraduate psychology majors about the benefits of joining Psi Chi and becoming involved in our activities. We sold baked goods and drinks to raise money for the Atlanta Food Bank. Thanks to Psi Chi members who volunteered their time.

There was strong interest in receiving information and help with preparing for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). The

GRE is an exam that students take as part of the application process to graduate programs. We invited a representative from Kaplan Center (provides GRE preparation classes) to speak about the GRE during our Fall induction and provided an opportunity for students to take a practice GRE exam in April. Close to 100 students took advantage of this opportunity. Each student received an analysis of his or her performance to help them prepare for this exam.



Psi Chi's Induction Fall 2007

What Does "Advising" Mean to You?

Dr. Sarah Cook

In departments across the university and around the nation, students frequently comment on the need for more (or better) advising. What does this mean? When you think of advising, do you think of information about which courses you should take, and when, and in what order?

Do you think of someone providing assistance to help when you have registration problems or can't get into a course you need? Or do you think of things that might be more properly called "mentoring"—things like advice on how to prepare for graduate study, how to gain education and experience that will help you get your first job in psychology, what career options are available for psychology majors, or even how to handle tough academic issues like difficult classes or interpersonal problems?

Advising seems to include a wide range of services, and with support from the Office of the Provost and the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, the psychology department has been revising and expanding our advisement services. In addition to advising services offered by Ms. Tenagne Mulugeta, and our graduate student advisors (Leslie Riddick and Louis Chow), students can now take advantage of group advising sessions held each semester. Four sessions focus on a range of topic undergraduates told us they were interested in learning more about: On finding a job, On making the Most of your Major, On the Honors Program in Psychology, and On thinking about Graduate School. Since spring 2007, we have offered these four sessions twice a semester. Student evaluations of the sessions have been overwhelmingly positive, with many students gaining new and valuable information.

The sessions are conducted by Leslie Riddick, Louis Chow, and Beth Anthony, with assistance from University Career Services (Finding a Job) and Dr. Tracie Stewart (The Honors Program in Psychology). The sessions are usually scheduled for different days of the week at the noon hour to maximize attendance. During each session, the graduate advisors raffle two \$25 gift certificates to the University Bookstore. Look for sessions such as the following during the Fall 2008 Semester:

1. Finding a Job
2. Making Your Major Matter
3. The Honors Program in Psychology
4. Thinking About Graduate School in the Social Sciences

The department is also developing a peer advising program where psychology majors who are rising juniors will have the opportunity to become a peer advisor. They will undergo a rigorous training program in exchange for credit in the fall semester of their junior year and begin advising students in the spring semester. In their senior year, they will assist in recruiting and selecting the next class of peer advisors. Exactly what will peer advisors do? The department is still working on a model, but peer advisors may contribute to the undergraduate newsletter and PURC. They may also serve as ambassadors for the department, attending Panther Preview, Majors Matter, and other recruitment activities hosted outside of the department. They may welcome new majors

to the department, serve as mentors to new majors, and conduct orientations to the department. Peer advisers will be knowledgeable in the areas of academic regulations, policies and registration procedures; campus resources; career and graduate school information, and career decision-making skills. Peer advisers may show students how to access information about graduate programs, the GRE, scholarships, and internship possibilities. With graduate advisors, peer advisers will host group advising sessions. If this sounds interesting to you, watch for further details. We hope to recruit the first class of peer advisers in spring, 2009.



Spring 2008 Psi Chi Induction

Dr. Deborah Garfin

We welcomed our newest set of Psi Chi members during our Spring Induction Ceremonies on Monday, April 14, 2008 in the University Center. Thirty-four members were inducted. In addition to the induction ceremony and a short members' meeting, we were fortunate to have a wonderful guest speaker, Dr. Erin McClure Tone. Dr. Tone's presentation, entitled "Watershed and country miles: Finding a path in psychology," was about her personal experiences as she developed her career. She provided both

inspiration as well as sound advice to students as they pursue their career goals. She entreated students to keep an open mind and be willing to take risks as they consider career options and gain experience in working. It is important to “take your time” and not be afraid to change your mind if your experiences teach you something new about yourself that has implication for the type of career you pursue.

Inductions are held twice yearly at the end of each semester. Applications to Psi Chi, the Psychology Honor Society, can be obtained at the reception desk on the 11th floor of Urban Life. The application deadline for each semester is at the midpoint of the semester. Requirements for eligibility include sophomore standing, 9 completed credits in psychology at GSU, a minimum GPA of 3.0 in psychology courses as well as an overall GPA of at least 3.0. Current Psi Chi students interested in serving on committees or applying for an executive position should contact Dr. Garfin at dgarfin@gsu.edu.

Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference

Dr. Deborah Garfin

The second annual Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference (GSURC) was held in the Student Center on March 14, 2008. GSURC is a university-wide conference that provides a forum for

undergraduate students to present their research as either poster or oral presentations or artistic displays. Students from twenty-two departments presented nearly 100 projects involving the work of 156 students. Psychology students presented 12 posters that addressed a wide range of research topics including vocabulary acquisition, role of anxiety and depression in negative bias, utilization of psychotherapy by ethnic minority students, and direct and indirect alcohol-related aggression. Psychology majors Tracy Hipp (first author) and Kim Soenksen won the Second Place Poster Award for their presentation entitled, “Predicting Victims’ Responses: Correlations in a Study of Street Harassment.” Thanks to the faculty who sponsored these projects and served as judges during the conference.

The Keynote Speaker for this year’s GSURC was Professor Leonard Teel, from the Department of Communication. Dr. Teel received this year’s University Faculty Award for Undergraduate Research, which recognizes his commitment to supporting undergraduate research. The Keynote Address was followed by a luncheon for student presenters, faculty sponsors, judges, and other invited guests.

The next opportunity for students to showcase their research at GSU will be during the Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference (PURC) to

be held during the Fall 2008 Semester.



GSURC Spring 2008

Undergraduate Research at GSU Takes Off in New Directions

Sunita Kapahi

On Friday, March 14, 2008, Georgia State University hosted the second annual Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference. This conference gave undergraduate students in all fields a chance to demonstrate the skills they have gained at GSU. Students presented poster, oral and artistic display presentations from 22 different departments across the university.

Stacia Gessner, a December 2007 graduate of Georgia State, presented a poster titled, “Emotionally evoked negative arousal and memory performance.” Gessner worked on this poster with Dr. Tricia King of the GSU Psychology

Department as part of her senior thesis.

"She [Dr. King] taught me so much about the research process," Gessner said. "And the graduate students in her lab showed me so much more than I ever learned in a classroom. Having a practical application really helped me understand it better."

Dr. Deborah Garfin, faculty associate for undergraduate research and the organizer for this year's conference, agrees that undergraduate research has many advantages. Garfin has been a faculty member at GSU for four years, and prior to this, worked as a school psychologist. As an undergraduate at Washington University in St. Louis, research helped to shape her career path,

"I was actually planning on going to medical school," Garfin said. "Then I took a course in developmental psychology, and got involved in a research project. It totally changed the direction of my career."

Garfin and Gessner both agree that some form of guided research is critical to undergraduate education.

"It develops critical thinking and analytical skills," Garfin said. "I also think it gives students information about whether or not this is something they want to do as a career before committing to a graduate program. Many students are surprised by how

much they enjoy the research process."

As one of these students, Gessner says it did help her decide this was the career she wanted to pursue, and suggests that all students get involved in research.

"It was easy at GSU. I just checked to see what research was happening in psychology and what positions were available, and with a few emails and meetings, I had a position."

Garfin also highlighted the commitment the university has to supporting undergraduate efforts to pursue research, and acknowledged that the university is also trying to address the needs of its nontraditional and working students.

"The university acknowledges and really appreciates the challenges that these students often face, and is working toward providing scholarships and stipends to support undergraduate research projects."

Scholarships presently available for undergraduate research include those through the McNair and University Scholars program. Plans are currently being made to establish additional funding for undergraduate research at the university in the coming years.



PURC Fall 2007

Conferences for the Psychology Undergraduate

Christopher Wells

The first conference that I attended was The Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference (PURC) a few semesters ago where I presented research from my practicum lab. I was extremely nervous standing beside my poster in a suit, sweating bullets while judges came by and asked me questions about my poster. My nerves were of my own making since all of the judges were very nice and did not put me on the spot at all. Little did I know standing beside my poster that day that I would be the next Undergraduate Director of PURC during the Fall 2007 semester. I couldn't have imagined that at the age of twenty-five I would be helping Dr. Chris Goode run a research conference.

This year, I also participated in GSURC, The Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference. While I didn't present a poster, I volunteered a

few hours of my time to help with the conference. Twelve of the 65 posters presented research from psychology's undergraduate students. I am currently working on a research poster from findings in my lab at Georgia State to be presented at the Annual Georgia Psychological Association Conference in Jekyll Island, GA at the end of May. Many of you are thinking about going to graduate school. Did you know that many graduate programs will not even look at you if you have not done at least a couple of posters? There are many possibilities available to you where you can go to present research that you have done on your own, in a methods course, or through a psychology department lab. Look on the Psi Chi's website (psichi.org) for a list of conferences all across the United States. Do your research so that you can present your research and make whatever dreams you have come true.



My Experience at GSU

Tracy Hipp

For anyone considering graduate study in the field of psychology, research experience is highly recommended. Whether you like it or not, graduate school (in any subfield of psychology) will most likely be research intensive and to that end, faculty members like to see applicants who can enter

Psi Chi Grants and Scholarships

Britnay Ferguson

If you are a Psi Chi member, be sure to consider applying to any of the number of awards currently available to undergraduate and graduate members sponsored by the organization. These awards are given annually, so if you'

Allyn & Bacon Awards | May 1

The Psi Chi/Allyn & Bacon Psychology Awards, sponsored by Allyn & Bacon Publishers, are open to all undergraduate Psi Chi members and are awarded to those who submit the best overall empirical research papers. The awards are \$1,000 for first place, \$650 for second place, and \$350 for third place. The abstracts of the winning papers, as well as photographs and brief biographies of the top three winners, are published in *Eye on Psi Chi*.

APA Science Directorate Internship & Relocation Grant | Jan 15

All undergraduate and graduate Psi Chi members are eligible to apply for this internship. The purpose of this program is to provide funds for one undergraduate student to gain experience in science administration through a summer internship with APA. The Science Directorate pays approximately \$3,500 for a 10-week period, while Psi Chi awards an additional \$3,500 for living expenses.

National Convention Research Awards | Dec 1

All Psi Chi members (undergraduate and graduate) are eligible to submit their research for the National Convention Research Awards. Cash awards of \$300 for undergraduates and \$500 for graduates are presented to students submitting the best research for Psi Chi sessions at the APA and APS national conventions.

Undergraduate Summer Research Grants | Mar 1

The purpose of this program is to provide funds for members to conduct summer research at nationally recognized research institutions. Psi Chi will award 14 grants of \$5,000 (a stipend of \$3,500 to the Psi Chi student plus \$1,500 to the sponsoring faculty member at the research institution).

Undergraduate Research Grants | Nov 1 & Feb 1

All undergraduate Psi Chi members are eligible to apply for these undergraduate research grants. The purpose of this program is to provide funds for members to defray the cost of conducting a research project. Applicants may request up to \$1,500 for each project. A total of \$45,000 has been allotted for this student grant program; \$22,500 for the November deadline and \$22,500 for the February deadline.

Regional Research Awards

Cash awards of \$300 each are presented to students submitting the best research papers to Psi Chi sessions at regional conventions. The number of awards in each region varies based on the size of the region; a total of 78 awards of \$300 each are available each academic year. Deadlines for submissions vary according to region and sometimes from year to year.

Application/ Submission guidelines and additional scholarship information for all the listed scholarships plus more are available

their program with some degree of research experience and proficiency. Opportunities for research through Georgia State University abound and are as diverse as the faculty members and practicum sites that offer these valuable opportunities. I was asked to share some of my experiences for this issue of Gray Matters along with offering some advice to readers, which I hope you will find useful.

I came to GSU as a post Bach, second-degree seeking student. I entered during the summer of 07 in senior standing and am in the process of wrapping up all of the required classes and credits three semesters later. Realizing that I had less time than many undergrads hoping to beef up their curriculum vitas prior to applying to graduate school, I began looking for research opportunities almost immediately. I had heard of PURC (Psychology Undergraduate Research Conference) through the grapevine and was aware of an impending deadline. After meeting with Dr. Goode, the director of PURC and asking him a little about the conference and the type of work that is typically presented, I decided that I would conduct some independent research. After many long hours at the library, and a couple of all-nighters parked in front of the computer in my living room, I completed a poster to present at PURC which was well received, earning the Diversity Award and the 1st Place Presentation Award. Although I didn't work on this project with any faculty or within

Collegiate Neuroscience Society

Sunita Kapahi

The Georgia State University Collegiate Neuroscience Society (CNS) is an organization that caters to undergraduate, post-baccalaureate and masters students at GSU who are interested in neuroscience. The goal of this club is to provide a way for students to get involved in the neuroscience community at GSU and in the metro-Atlanta area.

Psychology, neuroscience, and all of the other behavioral sciences can work together to study the question of behavior. Not only this, but neuroscience is one of the fastest growing fields, and Atlanta is one of the largest centers of neuroscience research.

The CNS is a useful resource in getting information about a number of neuroscience related courses, including many in the psychology department. They also do a lot to help students find neuroscience-related research opportunities and provide professional contacts with researchers and scientists in the field. In doing this, the CNS aims to make a difference in GSU students' education and provide a way for them to meet other students with similar interests.

For more information, please contact gsuneuroscience@gmail.com

any research lab, I received a lot of positive feedback and support from both faculty and peers.

While this project was done independently, I was also searching for an appointment in one of the research labs within the department. Still quite green to the entire process and the department itself, I scoured the faculty web pages looking for anyone with research interests similar to my own. I approached Dr. Rachelle Cohen, the Practicum Director to discuss my options and get some valuable advice on how best to approach

faculty, and what type of experience I should try to gain prior to applying for graduate school. I joined Dr. Cook's Violence Against Women Lab in the fall and began the process of collaborative research. Apart from the research experience itself, working in a lab is an invaluable way to get a sneak peek into the life of graduate student. My time in the lab has permitted me to build important relationships and gain mentorship from veteran graduate and post doc students. Another undergraduate who also volunteers in my lab proposed

that we create a poster together for GSURC (Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference). For this spring conference, Kim and I presented a poster based on research conducted through our lab's Street Harassment Research Collaborative while I also presented another poster of a study designed and conducted as a component of my Research Methods course. Along with a lot of valuable feedback, Kim and I received the 2nd Place Poster Award for our project. Spring also brought another appointment on a joint research project being conducted by two faculty members. While very different, all of these experiences have been valuable. From working independently to problem solving in a group, from learning how to best present one's data in poster format to learning how to orally present a highly synopsisized overview of a project to conference goers (any public speaking for me, being quite terrifying!) – I've learned more than I could have anticipated in just two semesters and am currently setting my sights to writing for publication. I highly recommend getting involved with research and conference opportunities, beginning with those available at Georgia State. It is a great experience, permits the opportunity to develop important relationships and may even lead to scholarships, awards or invitations to serve as a student representative on departmental committees. We have access to amazing faculty members eager to mentor

students in pursuit of higher education. If you are interested in learning more about research opportunities through GSU, visit the Practicum webpage, under the section for Undergraduates on the Psychology Department homepage.



Tracie Hipp receiving the Diversity Award and 1st Place Presentation Award at PURC 2007

My Research Practicum

Christopher Wells

As someone who is graduating in less than six weeks, I am grateful that I found out about the practicum experience in the psychology department at GSU while I still had time to make it worth my while. I have been working in a research lab at Georgia State for about two years and have gained so much from the experience. I initially wanted to figure out if I wanted to pursue a research or clinical career, but came out of the experience also knowing what area of research I wanted to focus on. I was able to conduct research in the field and present my work as a poster at a state level psychology conference! I have heard a few people grunt and complain saying that they are just “paper

pushers” in research labs and then leave after one semester of practicum. You have to understand that the “paper pushing” tasks that are assigned are also an extremely important part of the job of a researcher and if not done properly, can jeopardize the privacy of all of the participants of a study. So, if you are the “paper pusher” of a lab in the first semester of practicum, stick with it! Keep an open dialogue with everyone in the lab, demonstrate a committed and conscientious attitude, and you will gradually be given more responsibility and be able to make an important contribution to the research.



My Applied Practicum

Britnay Ferguson

I had planned to pursue a career in psychology since my high school years, but I was not aware of practicum until the end of my sophomore year at Georgia State. I visited the Psychology Department website, printed out a list of available research and applied practica, then highlighted those programs which most interested me. At the time, I was more interested in becoming a clinician than a researcher. Accordingly, I was most attracted to the applied practica. I was particularly drawn to two opportunities: the Tourette's patients at Peachford Hospital and the Grady Hospital's crisis hotline.

Ultimately, I decided to intern at Hillside Hospital, a small therapeutic community, which works with children ages 5 to 18 who have had traumatic or chaotic childhoods, i.e. no semblance of a stable family environment. To gain admission, the children must have severe emotional and behavioral problems, to the extent that they cannot be served safely and adequately at home or in a less restrictive community setting. Hillside is a level 6 treatment center, the most restrictive in the system. Behaviors leading to admission include—but are certainly not limited to—the following: self-injurious behaviors, physical aggression towards others, property destruction, sexually aggressive or predatory behaviors, and/or repeated elopements. As an employee, I was allowed to read history backgrounds for each individual child. In my reading, I found sexual abuse and/or negligent drug-abusing guardians present in the majority if not all of their histories.

I got the chance to work on all six housing units—both the closed and open settings—as well as the on-campus school. On these assignments, I primarily shadowed behavioral specialists, the persons responsible for direct supervision of the children. Most had bachelor's degrees in either psychology or sociology, but while this is preferred, it is not a requirement. Their shifts are twelve hours long, three to four days in a row.

Working at Hillside proved to be very challenging. Though I never worked more than six hours each week at most during my tenure, I

found the hours to be exhausting and the work required complete attention to the children. Whatever the children were doing, I was required to join them in the activity whether it was watching television, playing a sport, or drawing. I did not find this very stimulating and did not understand how I was helping the children who I found to be rather manipulative. It was also frustrating to me that many children are sent back to inadequate homes because they lose funding before treatment is completed. This work was not rewarding for me as I was not able to see the emotional and behavioral growth I had hoped would occur in these children as a result of this program. In the end, it was clear to me that clinical work in this type of community setting was not for me. Although I plan to continue to pursue a career in psychology, my practicum experience helped guide me toward a research graduate program. I am grateful that I figured this out now rather than after committing to a clinical degree.

Psychology Undergraduate Awards 2008

Congratulations to all the graduates of 2008!

Psi Chi wants to especially congratulate some outstanding undergraduates who received awards in the department of psychology.

Tracy Hipp was named the 2008 Outstanding Undergraduate Psychology Student

Lauren Walther was named the 2008 Outstanding Psychology Honors Student

Britnay Ferguson, Anat Goldblum, Ana Salvatierra, Lauren Walther, and Christopher Wells will each receive the designation of graduation with distinction in psychology.

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/~wwwpsy/Newsletters.htm>

