Our commitment...

The last few months have been tumultuous, to say the least. Whatever your political leanings, we are all riding a post-election roller coaster that will likely continue for a long time to come. We, in the academy, walk a fine line between freedom of speech and the inappropriate use of our position to further a political agenda. But, when it comes to actions that threaten the fundamental principles of a university, we cannot remain silent. The recent limitation imposed on immigration has immediate and serious implications for many of our faculty, students, and colleagues. Equally important, the executive order is contrary to the academic ideals of embracing diversity and the free and open exchange of ideas that have no national boundaries.

The Psychology community has responded by reaffirming our commitment to the core values written in our 2015 Strategic Plan – collaboration and collegiality, treating one another with respect, embracing diversity, striving for excellence, promoting ethical standards, and honoring our commitments. We will continue to build a community of inclusive excellence so that every person – faculty, staff, and student -- knows that they are valued, supported, and has a voice, regardless of race, color, gender, orientation, religion, or nationality.

Our Diversity Committee, chaired by Dr. John Ruiz, is working hard to ensure that Psychology is a leading advocate for diversity in everything we do – education, training, research, and the daily life of our department. I encourage you to follow our efforts on our Diversity webpage www.psychology.arizona.edu/diversity.

We are ALL Wildcats.

Lee Ryan
Department Head
IN THE NEWS

How Your BMI Might Affect Your Brain

There are plenty of reasons it’s important to maintain a healthy weight, and now you can add one more to the list: It may be good for your brain. UA researchers, graduate student Kyle Bourassa and professor David Sbarra have found that having a higher body mass index, or BMI, can negatively impact cognitive functioning in older adults. How? They say inflammation is to blame. The higher your BMI, the more your inflammation goes up.

Read the full article at UA News

The study was also referenced in the NPR article: The Wrong Eating Habits Can Hurt Your Brain, Not Just Your Waistline

Running as the Thinking Person’s Sport

Running seems to require a greater amount of high-level thinking than most of us might imagine. The sport seems to change how the brain works in surprising ways, according to a new report. The study, co-designed by associate professor of anthropology David Raichlen and professor of psychology Gene Alexander, found that the brains of competitive distance runners had different connections in areas known to aid in sophisticated cognition than the brains of healthy but sedentary people. The discovery suggests that there is more to running than mindlessly placing one foot in front of another.

Read the full article at The New York Times

Research Says Teens, Young Adults Explore Differently

The adolescent and college years are often regarded as periods of exploration — when teens and young adults begin to make decisions on their own for the first time. Yet, strategies for exploration may change significantly during the transition from adolescence to young adulthood. According to the research by assistant professor Robert Wilson and his collaborators at Harvard University and Weill Cornell Medical College, young adults are more likely to engage in “directed exploration,” or exploration driven by information seeking, than teenagers are. At the same time, teens seem to be more comfortable with uncertainty overall. The findings add to Wilson’s ongoing work on the explore-exploit dilemma in human decision-making.

Read the full article at UA News

Study Finds Naps May Help Preschoolers Learn

Research has shown that naps play an important role in sustaining new learning in infants. A new study from UA alumna Michelle Sandoval and associate professor Rebecca Gomez suggests naptime could have a similar effect on language learning in preschool-age children. The findings, which will be published in the journal Child Development, suggest that parents may want to consider maintaining regular naptimes for preschoolers, who are at an age at which naps have a tendency to dwindle.

Read the full article at UA News
ACHIEVEMENTS

Connie Beck Receives Outstanding Contributions and Service Award for 2017
"Dr. Beck joined AFCC in 1997 and has been a long-time contributor to both the international organization and the Arizona Chapter. The Arizona AFCC community, as well as the worldwide AFCC community, is deeply indebted to Dr. Beck. Without her ongoing leadership, the community would be less tightly connected, both across disciplines and across generations of professionals.” An outstanding example of how our faculty and graduate students are making a difference in Arizona and beyond.

Mary-Frances O’Connor Receives American Psychosomatic Society 75th Anniversary Award
For this special one-time anniversary award, Dr. O’Connor was recognized for her outstanding contribution to our understanding of the integration of emotion, social relationships, and health. She will give an invited address at the Society’s upcoming conference in Berkeley this October, and her work will be included in a special issue of Psychosomatic Medicine dedicated to this theme. Quite an honor!

John Allen Earns Humboldt Research Award for Work on Depression
Dr. Allen’s studies in causes of, and treatments for, clinical depression have earned him the prestigious Humboldt Research Award and the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in Germany. “The award is granted in recognition of a researcher whose fundamental discoveries, new theories, or insights have had a significant impact on their own discipline and who are expected to continue producing cutting-edge achievements in the future.”

Doctoral Student Awarded URBP 2016 Outstanding Graduate Student Mentor
Congratulations to Ariana Sickel who received the Undergraduate Biology Research Program’s 2016 Outstanding Graduate Student Mentor Award

UA Psychology Alum is Recipient of 2016 Alzheimer Award
Each year, the Associate Editors of the Journal of Alzheimer’s Disease select the best article from the previous year’s volumes. The 2016 awardee was Dr. Mark Bondi, who received his PhD in clinical neuropsychology from the University of Arizona in 1991. Dr. Emily Edmonds, who also received her PhD in clinical neuropsychology from UA in 2011 was the first author on the paper that the focus of this award.
SPOTLIGHTS

Kristina Stepanovic, Psychology Undergrad and recipient of the Fall 2016 College of Science Outstanding Senior Award

Kristina represents the best of what our psychology majors can accomplish in academics, research, and service before they graduate and move on to the next stage of their careers. Her record demonstrates the highest level of initiative, skill, and resourcefulness among this semester’s graduating class.

“I came to the UA in 2013 from Chicago, wanting to study medicine. Along the way, I decided to switch my major to psychology after my experience in several classes in the department. During my undergraduate career, I volunteered at a shelter for domestic violence, NAMI, outpatient centers, and the Teenage Parent High School. I worked in three different laboratories. I started with Professor Kristian Doyle in the college of medicine, investigating adaptive immune responses following stroke, where I published my first paper in Acta Neuropathologica Communications with colleagues (Woo!). I worked under Professor Erika Lawrence, investigating relationship quality in couples with one partner who identifies as Hispanic using semi-structured clinical interviews. Lastly, I spent the summer of 2016 at Yale University under Professor Jutta Joormann, investigating intolerance of uncertainty and its relationship with internalizing psychopathology and maladaptive emotion regulation using EEG.

I plan to pursue a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. I intend to investigate the role of stress and trauma in emotion regulation. I am interested in using psychophysiological methods such as skin conductance, heart rate, and blood pressure to examine what kind of change in arousal occurs during down regulation of a stressful or traumatic event. My ultimate goal is to obtain my PhD and become a tenured professor at a Research 1 university. Ideally, I would also be able to incorporate clinical practice into my work. After graduating from the UA in December, I am sad to be leaving Tucson and my mentors and friends from the Psychology department.”

Jessica Hanna-Andrews, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Cognitive Science

Dr. Hanna-Andrews is the newest addition to our faculty arriving at the UA in January from the University of Colorado Boulder.

“I couldn’t be more thrilled to join the Department of Psychology and the Cognitive Science Program. What a wonderful community of faculty, staff, postdocs and students I have the pleasure to call my academic family at UA! I direct the Neuroscience of Emotion and Thought (NET) Laboratory, currently being built on the 4th floor. I find the hidden nature of the human mind fascinating, and my lab’s research uses behavioral and neuroimaging techniques to seek insight into the day-to-day thoughts, memories, and emotions that make us unique as individuals. One branch of our work explores the benefits of spontaneous thoughts (or “mind-wandering”) for creativity, memory, prospection, and social well-being. Another branch explores the nature and consequences of intrusive/ruminative thoughts in depression and anxiety. An ultimate goal of the lab to develop interventions to help individuals harness the benefits of internally-guided cognition, and lead happier, healthier lives. I look forward to getting to know everyone this Spring, and am excited to co-teach a Neuroscience/Cognitive Science survey course (NSCS 200) as part of the Cognitive Science Program. I am also eager to experience the culture and great food Tucson has to offer, and can’t wait to explore Tucson and its surroundings by foot, bike, boat, or maybe even by ski...”
Internationally renowned researcher, popular instructor and sought after expert in sex offender assessment and treatment Dr. Judith Becker will be retiring from the Department of Psychology in May, 2017.

A Celebration to honor Judith will be held March 31st - April 1st on the University of Arizona campus. For details visit: http://eepurl.com/cDmx5X

Dr. Becker has had an impressive career that spans four decades. She has been recognized for her contributions to the field with numerous awards, appreciated by her colleagues and students and published over 170 scholarly works on the assessment and treatment of adult and adolescent sexual offenders. Her courses are always packed to capacity with students eager to learn. Dr. Becker has also provided expert testimony in many of the United States’ most notorious and violent serial sexual murder cases including Jeffrey Dahmer and the Green River Killer.

Dr. Becker joined the University of Arizona Department of Psychiatry in 1990 and transferred to the Psychology Department three years later where she has remained a beloved instructor, mentor and colleague. Judith’s favorite part of working in the Department over the last 27 years is that “it is a healthy environment where people are supportive and respectful of one another.” Judith also served the University in a variety of leadership roles including Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, Acting Director, Social and Behavioral Sciences Research Institute, Acting Director, School of Information Resources and Library Science, and Acting Department Head, Near Eastern Studies.

Dr. Becker has never doubted her chosen career path saying that she’s always had so many questions that need to be answered. “We can stop certain behaviors, but preventing them is important - if we only knew how.” When looking back at what was most rewarding throughout her career, she is most proud of her graduate students, mentoring them and seeing them succeed. Her students, in return, are just as grateful for her.

“I am so grateful to have had Judith for a mentor. Not only did she demonstrate intellectual curiosity and openness, including a willingness to follow the data even if it meant changing directions, she was such an incredible example of grace, humility, integrity, and generosity. We also had so much fun - I’ve laughed as hard sitting in Judith’s office as at any other time in my life. I carry so many Becker Life Lessons with me in my work and life to this day, and I strive to provide the kind of support and guidance that she gave me to my own students. She has touched so many lives through her direct mentorship and her influence on those of us who try to carry this forward. She is the #1 fan of all of her students and former students, and we are her biggest fans right back.”

Amanda Fanniff, Palo Alto University

“I went to graduate school at the University of Arizona specifically to work with Judith Becker, and I was not disappointed. From an academic standpoint, she was an excellent mentor who provided limitless opportunities for her students, including co-authoring book chapters and papers, giving talks at national and international conferences, and becoming active in the local criminal justice system. In addition to all of the academic and intellectual gifts she bestowed, she was a truly kind, warm, supportive and generous person, who made it clear that she would always be my advocate and ally. She also never missed an opportunity to mentor her students in terms of how to manage the academic and clinical worlds, and how to function effectively as a professional woman. As a graduate student, I was always in awe of her success and her apparent ease in managing the many challenging and weighty tasks she undertook, and now as a forensic clinician and academic, I am no less impressed by her accomplishments. She was a wonderful role model to me, and I am forever grateful for the opportunity to study with her and get to know her on a personal level. She is a truly remarkable woman.”

Laura Kirsch, University of Montana

“I was honored to be the last graduate student Judith chose to work with her. Her mentorship has been an invaluable opportunity to work with a pioneer in her field of research. She is never short of stories that highlight her years of experience, as well as a sense of humor she maintains about her work. I am grateful that Judith has not only been a knowledgeable mentor, but also a genuinely caring person who always takes an interest in her students and supports them both personally and in their professional development.”

Cassie Valerio, PhD Student
Our goal for 2017 is to raise $100,000 for the department. Your contributions will allow us to continue recruiting talented faculty, enrich student learning and build long-term strategic alliances in our community. For questions about our upcoming fundraising campaign, contact our Development Coordinator, Dale Schoonover at dschoonover@email.arizona.edu or (520) 621-1477.

UA Psychology alumni are spread across the country and around the world – making enormous contributions to so many fields – in scientific research, academia, health care, business, law, education, marketing and advertising, government policy, and more. Let us know where you are, what you’re doing, and how UA Psychology has influenced your work.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU
www.psychology.arizona.edu/alumni

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