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The beginning of fall semester brought some 43,193 students to campus. Of the new first-year students, over 50% more or less aced high school, with GPAs of 3.9 or higher. These superb new students were chosen from 32,800 applicants, a number that will likely increase next year as we move to a new application system. Despite the headlines about budget-cutting that dominated the University news last spring, UW–Madison remains a very hot choice for students from across the country and around the world.

Those students who take courses in Psychology and who become Psychology majors will find that our department is eager for the new year. We cannot deny that budget cuts will reduce some choices for our students, but we are committed to improving the quality of the courses and programming that remain. We have enacted curriculum changes that will facilitate on-time graduation for our students in the spring of 2016 and beyond. We have developed some new courses for fall semester, and we are revising old ones. Moreover, we intend to enlarge our array of summer course offerings for 2016 so that students from UW and elsewhere will have more choices in planning their education. We hope that more students will be in Madison during the summer of 2016 to take Psychology courses and to enjoy all that Madison has to offer during the great summer months.

Along with the College of Letters and Science, our Department is focusing more on helping students make career choices. Our many successful alumni are playing a major role in explaining how a Psychology major opens doors to a variety of careers. If you know current Psychology majors, make sure that they take advantage of these opportunities to learn about careers.

In other news, our Department continues to rank highly in the national surveys, and our faculty continue to win prestigious awards—too many to mention here. We are delighted to welcome Professor James Li, from the University of California, Los Angeles, as a new faculty member in our clinical program. We are also happy to report that Professors Kristin Shutts and Allyson Bennett achieved tenure this past year.

In closing, I must thank our alumni who were so generous in giving to the Department during this past year. Mark and Ilene Laufman provided funds for the Department’s first privately endowed professorship, a landmark in our history. Many other alumni provided gifts that will directly benefit undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty, as well as the Department as a whole. We thank you all.

On Wisconsin!

Do you have an update? We are always looking for alumni to feature in our newsletter. If you would like to share your story in an upcoming newsletter, please contact Melanie Jones at mjones@wisc.edu.
First of its Kind: The Mark and Ilene Laufman Family Professorship

History was made this year when Mark and Ilene Laufman established the first endowed professorship in the Department of Psychology. The Mark and Ilene Laufman Family Professorship was funded utilizing the Morgridge Match to assist in retaining faculty who contribute to the betterment of a premiere, top-ranked department.

Serving as the Chair of Psychology’s Board of Visitors, Mark saw the extraordinary demands put on faculty who assume the role of department chair, hindering their ability to focus on pursuing their research. Seeing this as a challenge, the Laufmans wished to fund a professorship that provides additional funding for the chair position, assisting the chair to continue their scholarly work.

“This endowed faculty position is the first of its kind in the Department of Psychology and its great effect will be felt in perpetuity thanks to the generosity of Mark and Ilene Laufman,” explained Hill Goldsmith, Department of Psychology Chair and inaugural recipient of the Mark and Ilene Laufman Family Professorship, “For this we are forever grateful.”

Mark and Ilene Laufman are residents of Madison, WI. Mark graduated in 1966 with a major in psychology, his son graduated from UW-Madison and his granddaughter started in the Fall of 2015. Mark found great success in building an investment practice here in Madison and has served on various boards throughout the community, specifically serving as chair of the Department of Psychology’s Board of Visitors for the past eight years.

“Forward Under 40, Heidi Allstop”

Heidi Allstop (B.A., ’10) desperately needed to “spill.” By her junior year of college, she felt stressed, lonely, and depressed, and she yearned to connect with peers who could empathize.

So Allstop created Spill, an anonymous online forum where fellow UW-Madison students could share their troubles and receive responses from up to five peers online, with additional support from specialists who screened posts for life-threatening circumstances.

Under Allstop’s direction, Spill evolved from a student organization to a small business to an empathy powerhouse that encompassed tens of thousands of young people from nearly 250 campuses in 24 countries. Every day, hundreds of young people posted on spillnow.com, seeking advice on everyday topics — romantic relationships, school stresses, and job woes — to more serious issues that could then be triaged to professionals.

Just a year after Allstop graduated, Spill was selected for Techstars, a prestigious Boston-based incubator program that gave her access to additional funding and powerful mentors. In 2012, Spill took first place in the Global Social Venture Competition, beating out more than 600 other contenders from around the world. The company went on to launch its mobile apps and expanded to high schools, attracting attention from the New York Times, TIME, Fast Company, and dozens of local newspapers and broadcast stations before it joined forces with MeToo.

While Allstop lives and works in San Francisco now, she comes back to campus to guest-lecture on entrepreneurship. “I hope that I can someday become a mentor to other students who have a dream in their souls,” she says, “and I know that fellow alumni will continue to do so for me.”

—WFAA Staff

“My psych degree came in surprisingly handy in the real world. I learned that the basis of business and management is dealing with people, so understanding how they think, feel, and relate to others is key to success. I love that I was able to study a passion and then go on to live and breathe it every day.”

—Heidi Allstop
#UWinLondon, Spring 2015

Studying abroad is often noted as one of the most life-changing experiences of a student's undergraduate education, but it can also be scary for students to leave the comforts of home to explore a new country on their own. In collaboration with the Office of Biological Science Exploration the Department developed a spring break study abroad program for first-year students. The goal was to engage students early on about the importance of thinking locally and globally about research and the application of knowledge.

At UW-Madison, 15 first year students enrolled in a seminar entitled “International Exploration of the Biological and Psychological Sciences,” and a philosophy course focusing on contemporary moral issues. The second course facilitated the students’ participation in ethical debates at the conclusion of each thematic unit. While abroad, students used England as their classroom as they explored these topics at museums, historical sites, and with British scholars.

We invited scholars from across the university to discuss their international work within our thematic units related plant, animal, and human biology.

Psychology major Yusra Murad (first row, second from left in picture above right) shares her experiences here:

“As I think back to my experience, what strikes me most is that the curiosity and anticipation that I had regarding this opportunity has in no way dissipated. Prior to the course my understanding of the biological and psychological sciences were quite textbook oriented – I suppose I expected to be memorizing mitosis cycles, and learning about blood pressure and cholesterol, more so than pygmy marmoset behavior in Vietnam or how the Slow Food movement in London could have both biological and psychological implications. Throughout the semester I found myself continuously struck by the vast and powerful force of questions – questions which motivated each speaker we met to move beyond their textbooks and take their curiosities to the real world, to real people, to find real solutions.

I distinctly remember Professor Chuck Snowdon reflecting fondly on explaining to young Vietnamese children that the pygmy marmosets which they brushed off as part of the landscape are in fact complex, social creatures, deserving of care and communal respect. Without global initiatives like his, to bring people together through education, science can only stretch so far.”

## Brogden Hall and Psychology History

Although the home of the Department of Psychology is often referred to as “the Psych building,” it is formally known as W.J. Brogden Hall, named after Professor Wilfred “Wulf” J. Brogden, an experimental psychologist in the Department from 1939-1973. Brogden was known as a rigorous experimentalist who studied issues in classical conditioning and learning, as well auditory acuity in animals. Brogden was characterized as a model of precise experimental methodology for others to follow.

Brogden was also known as a gifted administrator having served as Department Chair, Assistant Dean of the College, and Associate Dean of the Graduate School. In 1974, “the building was rededicated as the W. J. Brogden Psychology Building, a fitting recognition of his role in the planning, and construction of a very complicated, but functional teaching and research structure.”
Psychologist Seth Pollak

Poverty Disturbs Children’s Brain Development and Academic Performance

Income inequality is growing in the United States. For children, growing up poor hinders brain development and leads to poorer performance in school, according to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics.

It has long been known that low socioeconomic status is linked to poorer performance in school, and recent research has linked poverty to smaller brain surface area. The current study bridges these converging lines of evidence by revealing that up to 20 percent of the achievement gap between high- and low-income children may be explained by differences in brain development.

Using a sample of 389 healthy children and adolescents from age four to 22, psychologist Seth Pollak and his colleagues compared scores on academic achievement tests with tissue volume in select areas of the brain. In addition to Professor Bobbi Wolfe from the Dept. of Economics, two former graduate students also were involved in the study and co-authors of the recent article: Nicole Hair, an economist now at the University of Michigan, and Jamie Hanson, a psychologist and neuroscientist now at Duke University.

The researchers found that children who grew up in families below the federal poverty line had gray matter volumes 8 to 10 percent below normal development. They did not find differences between children from middle class and affluent families, but those only 50 percent above the poverty line showed gray matter volumes 3 to 4 percent below the norm. In other words, more money does not necessarily mean better outcomes but at a certain point a “drop-off” effect of income occurs where a lack of financial resources is detrimental to development.

Pollak was hoping to see the gap closing as children grew older, spent more time in school and outside their homes, but this was not the case. The gap in brain development was still present at age 22.

To solely address the effects of low income, the researchers excluded children who had other factors known to negatively affect brain development, such as a family history of psychiatric diagnosis or a risky pregnancy. The results were clear—the effects of low socioeconomic status are apparent even in kids who grew up otherwise healthy.

A recent report from the National Center for Education Statistics revealed that in 2013, 51 percent of students in U.S. public schools were from low-income families. Children who grow up in low-income families are exposed to more environmental stressors, such as less access to healthy food, unsafe neighborhoods, and stressed parents. Pinpointing the specific causes will be difficult, but in future studies Pollak and his group hope to identify how different social programs, such as free lunch programs or housing vouchers, can help children who grow up poor.

New Undergraduate Scholarships

This past fall, seventeen undergraduate students received the Bryan’s Aspiring Psychology Student Award. A fund created by and given in memory of Bryan Hendricks, a former lecturer in our Department, specializing in entry-level and core courses. Award recipients have the top UW-Madison GPAs among newly declared psychology majors, ranging from 3.91 to 4.0. This prestigious honor is accompanied by a one-time monetary award of $2,500 toward a goal of helping students with their tuition expenses. Bryan thrived on working with bright, ambitious, energetic students. Bryan was especially sensitive to, and appreciative of, the skills and scholarship demonstrated by undergraduate students. He wanted to inspire them in the early steps in the Psychology Department by celebrating their hard work and encourage them to pursue departmental opportunities, such as undergraduate research and honors programs.

shout out! We are grateful to Dave Weiner (’54 and member of the Psychology Board of Visitors) for his continued support in designing and printing our Department newsletter.
How to Support Wisconsin Psychology

We have a long history of excellence in teaching and research in this department. To maintain this high standard we need support from our alumni and friends. Donations in any amount are greatly appreciated and go directly to supporting our students, faculty, and programs. If you would like, you may designate your gift to one of the following areas (please check one):

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Please mail this form along with your contribution to:
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For more information on how you can help or to donate online, please visit our Department website at http://psych.wisc.edu and click “Alumni & Friends” or contact Professor Janet Hyde, jshyde@wisc.edu, (608) 262-9522.