

Psychology Matters

NEWS FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS DECEMBER 2022



Department of Psychology
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON



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Psychology Matters is the alumni and friends newsletter of the Department of Psychology. This newsletter was printed using gifts from alumni and friends.

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DEAN'S MESSAGE



Fall semester is well underway, and there is much to celebrate this year! UW–Madison’s freshman class is, once again, the largest in history, and it is also the most diverse. Here in L&S, we have a student body full of talent and we are providing a world-class experience for those students. Engagement at SuccessWorks, our innovative career advising center, is at record levels.

One of my top priorities is to make sure we have a welcoming and inclusive environment in which all of our students can thrive and feel at home. I am thrilled with the work happening in our Center for Academic Excellence. CAE continues to provide a strong community of support, guidance, mentoring and connection for students from underrepresented groups, from the time they set foot on campus until the day they graduate. Our new leader of CAE, Karen Stroud-Felton, is setting ambitious goals including a digital-first strategy to share students’ stories in their own words.

Great people and strong teamwork are pushing diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging efforts forward in every department in L&S. As our Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion DeVon Wilson put it, “this is mission work.” Visit ls.wisc.edu/about/diversity-and-inclusion to learn more about college-level initiatives and check in with your department about how to get involved.

We welcomed our largest cohort ever of new faculty this fall, and we celebrated 18 colleagues in an Investiture Ceremony that recognized both our great faculty and the wonderful donors who made those professorships and chairs possible.

We need world-class spaces in which to learn, teach, and carry out research. We look forward to seeing the new building for Computer, Data & Information Sciences begin to rise in 2023 and we are deep in the design phase for Irving & Dorothy Levy Hall.

As I reflect on our progress, I am constantly reminded that together, we can and will make a difference. Thank you for all you do for the College of Letters & Science! On, Wisconsin!

Eric Wilcots, Dean

*Mary C. Jacoby Professor of Astronomy
UW–Madison College of Letters & Science*

FROM THE DEPARTMENT CHAIR



Greetings, Badgers!

The beginning of the new academic year is an exciting and energizing time. This year is no exception and is particularly exciting as we welcome a record-breaking freshman class (8,600 students), a new Chancellor, Jennifer L. Mnookin, and—in our department—a phenomenal and inspiring group of new faculty members. We are thrilled that they chose to make UW–Madison their home and hope that you will join us in welcoming them to our department community. You can read about their research on page 4 of this newsletter.

Our award-winning faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, staff, and alumni are all integral to our success in meeting the missions of our department and university. Growth in our faculty and staff is especially important now as the number of undergraduate majors continues to increase on campus. Psychology remains the second most popular major in L&S with 1,700 majors. We are committed to providing these students with excellent and meaningful learning opportunities, whether in the classroom, through hands-on research, or experiential learning in the community. Growth in our numbers and our diversity expands the knowledge produced at UW–Madison and provides opportunities for our students, including next-generation scientists.

Our research and teaching benefit society with a broad and lasting impact in our local community and far beyond. As you'll read, our research spans topics from child development and developmental disorders to understanding how the brain works to reduction of prejudice, social injustice, and violence.

Our alumni are remarkable as well, proving that the psychology degree prepares students for a multitude of career options. You'll read about one of them (page 6) and can find more alumni features on our website and social media accounts.

We are proud of our alumni and their accomplishments and are grateful for the opportunity to be part of their educational experience. As always, if you are in Madison, please stop by to say hello. We are always happy to reconnect and hear about you!

On, Wisconsin!

Allyson Bennett

Chair, Department of Psychology

Mark and Ilene Laufman Family Professor of Psychology

GETTING TO KNOW CHAIR ALLYSON BENNETT

...

Psychology Matters: What's something from your line of research that you wish more people understood or knew about?

Allyson Bennett: Comparative psychology helps us understand how other animals learn, solve problems, and perceive things in their world. Monkeys playing with toys, puzzles, and videogames can tell us about complex psychological processes that are both similar and different from humans and from other animals. This kind of research has advanced scientific knowledge—identifying brain regions and circuits involved in learning, memory, and cognition, for example—and also provided evidence about the value of enriched environments to support healthy development.

...

PM: During your tenure on campus, what is one thing you're most proud of having accomplished?

AB: Sharing the excitement and value of scientific research with fantastic undergraduate students in my Psych 225 Research Methods class and in my research lab. Whether students go on to pursue research careers or not, their lives are enriched by being able to critically evaluate claims and thoughtfully bring scientific evidence to help inform their work, make decisions about important issues, and continual growth and understanding of the world in which they live.

...

PM: When you're not teaching classes, conducting research, or mentoring students, where might we find you?

AB: In the garden or kayaking and hiking in one of Wisconsin's beautiful parks and nature areas.

...

PM: Where is the best spot in Madison to unwind?

AB: Pheasant Branch Conservancy.

NEW FACULTY

The Department of Psychology is thrilled to welcome five new outstanding scholars to our faculty this fall, representing a wide range of expertise in biological, developmental, and social psychology. The three other incoming faculty featured on our cover will be joining us in 2023 and 2024 and we look forward to introducing them then.



NICK BUTTRICK

My primary area of specialty is in social and socioecological psychology, the study of how our world view is shaped by social, cultural, and historical events. My work is focused on the roots of and remedies for societal issues, especially issues in American social life such as the psychology of gun ownership and the ways that we think about effort and meritocracy. I bring a multidisciplinary approach, using tools that include big data analytics applied to information obtained from social media, governmental records, and other similar trace data; lab and field experiments; and the old-fashioned approach of simple observation and asking people what they think about the world.



SARA CHADWICK

I use diverse methods and interdisciplinary approaches from psychology, gender and women's studies, and public health to study gender, coercion, orgasm, sexual desire, and other aspects of sexuality. I am especially interested in identifying and assessing "gray-area" forms of sexual coercion and dating abuse—that is, negative or problematic experiences and behaviors that do not fit normative definitions of sexual or dating violence. My work is also deeply invested in understanding how such experiences differ for women, men, and gender/sexual minorities (e.g., trans, nonbinary, bisexual, lesbian/gay) and contribute to sexual and psychological health disparities (sexual functioning, psychological distress, STI/HIV risk).

Annual Report / Year In Review 2021–22

As the second most popular declared major in L&S with 1,700 undergraduates, the Department of Psychology prepares students for a multitude of career options by providing rigorous training in critical thinking, expert instruction in statistics, and a deep understanding of behavior and psychological processes. Our faculty conduct award-winning research across a wide range of topics from child development and developmental disorders to the reduction of prejudice and racial and social class academic achievement gaps, and mentor the best and brightest graduate students. Your support makes a world of difference in providing our students with an exceptional experience in our classrooms, labs, and community.

Student Success

- More than 60 undergraduate students were recognized this spring with financial awards recognizing academic excellence, outstanding involvement in cognitive science research, demon-

strated career interest in psychological research, and more.

- Two of the three Dean's Prizes, one of the College's highest academic honors, went to Psychology majors Regan Hawkins and Valerie Buroker.
- Graduate student Quanfa "Frank" He received the prestigious Wisconsin Distinguished Graduate Fellowship Award.
- Graduate student Haley Weaver received a Graduate Student Award from the Intellectual & Developmental Disabilities Research Center.

Faculty Leadership

- We hired eight faculty members (five of whom joined us this fall) who bring with them new scholarship and course offerings that will be of high interest to future undergraduate and graduate students.
- James Li was named the first A.A. Alexander Professor of Psychology and Psychiatry.
- Paula Niedenthal received the Chancel-

lor's Distinguished Teaching Award.

- Morton Gernsbacher received the 2021 Psychonomic Society Clifford T. Morgan Distinguished Leadership Award.
- Diane Gooding was elected as the Board President of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Dane County.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is an increasingly important source of revenue for the Department of Psychology. The Department of Psychology created four new funds in 2021–22, now with a total of 30 funds managed by the Wisconsin Foundation and Alumni Association (WFAA).

Our warmest thanks to everyone who gave to the Department of Psychology's Annual Fund this year!

- **119 gifts** to fund since Jan. 1, 2022
- **112 total donors** to fund since Jan. 1, 2022
- **\$22,242 in total gifts** since Jan. 1, 2022



STEPHEN FERRIGNO

My research program focuses on the evolutionary, developmental, and cultural origins of human thought. Specifically, I study number cognition, recursion, logical reasoning, and metacognition. The research I do is aimed at understanding how we learn early mathematics and language skills. These early skills are often when some children begin to fall behind their peers. One of the goals of my work is to help inform early math and language curricula and develop targeted interventions that could be implemented in preschools and head-start programs here in Wisconsin and across the country.



DEMIS GLASFORD

The work of our lab is concerned with the study of social injustice, from research on inequality to understanding relations between groups of differing power or cultural realities to the perspectives of racial, ethnic, and religious minority group members. We examine our research questions primarily through the lens of social psychology, but our approach is interdisciplinary, such that we often use theory and research from a variety of disciplines, such as cultural anthropology or political psychology. We study these issues in both the lab and applied settings (e.g., in schools; urban communities).



MORGAN JERALD

I study sociocultural factors that influence gender beliefs, sexuality, and sexualization among Black women. I have two primary lines of research. First, I'm interested in how people learn about race, gender, and stereotypes from the media. Second, my current work explores how awareness of dominant stereotypes about Black women influences their physical, mental, and sexual well-being.

Fast Facts:

- 11 of our funds are callable funds (funds established to provide liquidity and preserve capital)
- 19 of our funds are endowment funds (funds established to support a program in perpetuity)

Highlighted Funds:

- **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Fund in Psychology:** This callable fund supports the Department of Psychology's Racial Equity Initiatives
- **Department of Psychology's Professional Master's in Data Science in Human Behavior Scholarship Fund:** Established by alumnus John Dolan, a member of our department's Board of Visitors, this fund assists students enrolled in the newly established Professional Master's Program who are pursuing a master of science degree in psychology, with an emphasis on data science in human behavior.

If you're interested in creating a fund in the Department of Psychology, please contact Marit Barkve, Director of Development at Marit.Barkve@supportuw.org



"After graduation, I plan to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology with hopes of one day becoming a forensic psychologist. I have always been extremely passionate about the field of psychology and helping those who are most vulnerable. It is people like Dr. Bryan Hendricks who remind me that those who go into psychology do it for the greater good, to help those in need. Now I am one step closer to being able to pursue that dream of mine."

—Sofia Drotts '22, recipient of an Outstanding Undergraduate Research Scholarship

Psychology Major to Zillow Trailblazer

By Sara Stanislawski x'25

Meghan Reibstein found the intersection of her business experience and passion for people in a job made possible with technology and prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Reibstein, vice president of product management and flexible work at Zillow, helps make work more flexible in time and place for the company's workforce while working flexibly herself.

Reibstein graduated with a BA in psychology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 2006.

"I'm 16 years out [from graduation], and I'm doing the most thrilling work of my career," Reibstein says. "I'm in a pretty unique space where there are not yet a lot of people leading."

Overseeing traditional tech product management and flexible work at Zillow, Reibstein's work deals with a core question: how we work. She examines how employees best operate, interact, and experience change, using survey responses to provide insight into employee sentiment around operational and cultural practices.

"This intersection of people and business is where I thrive," Reibstein says. "I'm at least one point of evidence that you can find really, really fulfilling work with a psychology degree."

During her time at UW, Reibstein knew a psychology degree would give her a liberal arts education and open many options for her future, including a clinical or business path.

"I knew [psychology] would help me learn about the thing I was interested in, which is the way humans think, behave, and interact," Reibstein says.

Reibstein says the psychology courses she took have influenced how she thinks about aspects of her career including stakeholder management, influencing others without authority, and helping people with different skills and backgrounds accomplish a goal together.

But at the time she graduated, Reibstein was unsure of her future.

"I came out with a great education and a strong ability to connect with people but not a clear sense of what I was going to do with my degree, or with, you know, my life," Reibstein says.

While earning her degree, Reibstein worked nearly full time at Stillwaters and

get hired – not even for the most entry level of roles," Reibstein says. "I certainly learned about resilience through that process, which still serves me today."

Reibstein's career path took her from restaurant manager to administrative assistant to product management to Amazon, where she served as the single-threaded leader on the first Prime Day and also as a Technical Advisor to Amazon's CHRO.

"[Prime Day] was a big deal for my career and for my learning," Reibstein says. "I think at the same time, though, I had to face that what we were doing was creating a shopping holiday." While Reibstein found the logistics of the project fascinating, it did not match her passions.

"Ultimately, after seven years at Amazon, I was really hungry for a change," Reibstein says. "One of the things that I've continued to examine in my career is how I best match my skillset and experiences to work that both aligns with my interest and provides a net positive impact to society."

Reibstein was looking for an employee-centered workplace and says Zillow was well known for that.

When Reibstein started at Zillow three years ago, she and a few others on her team set a goal to pilot a work-from-anywhere program. Just a few months later, the COVID-19 pandemic sent the company's workforce home in March 2020, and the pilot was

underway (albeit at a much bigger scale than originally planned).

In the early months of the pandemic, Reibstein and her team surveyed employees about their well-being and interest in flexible work post-pandemic.

When the company decided that its employees' work would be flexible in time and place for the long term, designing Zillow's flexible work became a crucial part of Reibstein's position overseeing organi-



Espresso Royale Cafe, two then-State Street staples, to put herself through school.

That restaurant experience didn't translate very well to business, at least not out of the gate. After many interviews and rejections, Reibstein eventually got her first job in the corporate business industry through a temp agency.

"I remember going to interview, after interview, after interview and I couldn't

zational operations.

Reibstein's work has since been covered by news outlets including The New York Times, Financial Post, GeekWire, and Fortune.

"It's incredibly fulfilling work," Reibstein says, "combining my business leadership experience with my training in psychology to help make people's lives better by providing flexibility." And there have been some special moments for her – she spends much of her time in Asheville, NC, living next to her mom and brother, and she was featured on the front page of the business section of The New York Times: "I never in a million years thought that would happen."

Reibstein shares her experience and skills as an advisory board member for the Erdman Center for Operations and Technology Management at the Wisconsin School of Business. She mentors students in the Operations and Technology program, a track focused on product management.

Reibstein describes her life path as "tortuous," a word she used in her application essay to the Seattle University School of Law a few years after graduating from UW.

"When my mom was helping me refine my essay, she knew this word 'tortuous.' Not torturous, but tortuous, this kind of winding pathway," Reibstein says. "And that is absolutely a part of my story, just taking something to get started and then learning and growing and moving to the next thing."

Reibstein encourages students to be patient while finding a career combining their skillset and interests, and to take advantage of UW's resources, make a plan, and stay open-minded.

Reibstein attended law school for a year but decided it was not for her. She says she learned the importance of being open-minded and ready for anything from her time in Madison.

"Had I not made the decision to leave law school and continue on a path that felt authentic to me – albeit a tortuous, windy one" says Reibstein, "I wouldn't be in the job that I'm in today, getting to do this really creative, forward-thinking work – to change the way work shows up in our lives."

Psychology Major Strengthens Student STEM Interest with Bridging Wisconsin Program

By Sara Stanislawski x'25

Last spring, psychology major Jonathan Bryan cultured bacteria in petri dishes, demonstrated laser lights and spectrums, and guided an engineering egg drop challenge with middle school students from the Oneida Nation School System. The hope was to get students interested and engaged in STEM subjects.

"Our goal was to engage the students directly with STEM learning," Bryan says. "We had group activities to connect the students with various STEM subjects, leading to greater interaction with the material and shared science experiences."

The STEM activities are part of the Bridging Wisconsin Program, one of seven undergraduate projects awarded a 2022–23 Wisconsin Idea Fellowship. The fellowships provide support and funding, of which a portion is awarded to students as a personal stipend, to semester- or year-long projects addressing issues that local or global communities identify. The Bridging Wisconsin Program, which connects the Oneida Nation School System with UW–Madison, aims to promote the inclusion of diverse cultures in STEM.

Bryan, a third-year student also majoring in neurobiology and molecular and cell biology, came across a Morgridge Center email with details about the fellowship. After checking the requirements, he met with fellow undergraduate students Andrew Yang, Chao Xiong, and Mai Chada Vang with whom he co-founded a pre-health student

organization, Medical Advocacy and Venture Outreach Cornerstone (MAD-VOC), and started drafting a project proposal.

With the help of faculty advisors Seth Pollak from the Department of Psychology and Kristen Malecki from the Population Health Sciences program, the team narrowed their focus. The Oneida Nation School System was interested in being involved with the project, and Bryan says the team is greatly appreciative of the staff and students involved.

Over a school week last spring, the team engaged in STEM activities with middle school students and discussed their own education paths and the interests of the students. The team also talked about resources available for students on the UW–Madison campus.

Bryan says his psychology major prepared him for creating the content used during visits to the Oneida Nation School System. He brought incentives for students answering questions and incorporated movement and opportunities for reflection to help students stay engaged. During their visit, the team received feedback from instructors and the participating middle school students.

"In a sense, my psychology major made me more aware of asking and listening to others' perspectives than forming my own assumptions," Bryan says.

This partnership between the Oneida Nation School System and UW–Madison will be continued by the pre-health student organization MADVOC.

"The Wisconsin Idea greatly resonates with all of our team members," Bryan says. "From this project, we hope to see an eruption of other bridging programs with different regions of the USA and abroad."



This program is made possible in part by the Wisconsin Idea Fellowship Program from the Morgridge Center for Public Service.



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Your support makes a difference.

Your gifts to the Department of Psychology help provide world-class experiences for our undergraduate and graduate students. Emily Hilton, a recipient of one of our many donor-funded awards, said: "The Serendipity Award was incredibly valuable as it afforded me uninterrupted time to focus on my dissertation over the summer. With the award, I was able to make significant progress on my dissertation analyses ahead of a busy year of working on my dissertation while concurrently participating in a clinical practicum at Children's Wisconsin, applying for clinical internship, and TAing. I am grateful to have had this protected, dedicated research time and my dissertation is certainly more sophisticated as a result."

Would you consider making a gift to the Department of Psychology Annual Fund or our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fund?

Give online at supportuw.org/giveto/psychology or with a check payable to the University of Wisconsin Foundation (with the fund name in the memo section). Mail to: University of Wisconsin Foundation U.S. Bank Lockbox Box 78807 Milwaukee, WI 53278-0807

Want to discuss other ways to support the Department and its students? Contact Marit Barkve at marit.barkve@supportuw.org or 608-515-3052.