**MPA: An Experience Unlike Any Other**

By Madelyn Becker

MMPI, PTSD, DSM, OCD…To many of you, MPA may seem like just another cryptic psychology acronym that you learned in Introductory Psychology class. However, MPA holds tremendous significance to Creighton’s Psychology Department faculty and students who get the chance to attend the MPA conference. MPA stands for one of the largest regional psychological organizations in the nation, the Midwestern Psychological Association. The organization’s mission is to promote the advancement of psychological science by conducting an annual meeting, which MPA has held every year since its founding in 1928.

The MPA annual meeting is one of the most widely attended conferences by Creighton faculty and their students. It is open to all psychologists, students and members of the public who are interested in the scientific study of psychology. The purpose of the conference is to share research across all areas of the field, something to which Dr. Corey Guenther, assistant professor in psychology can attest. He said because MPA is “a general-type conference, every topic is covered, from clinical psychology to health psychology to cognitive, and so on. The MPA conference provides a good variety of research for attending undergraduate students.”

At each conference, there are talks from leading psychologists across the United States, papers and poster presentations on a wide range of topics in current psychological literature, workshops addressing the teaching of psychology, and discussion groups, roundtables, and social events where members can share ideas and interests.

Reminiscing on his first MPA conference in 2004 as a senior undergraduate, Dr. Guenther talked about how the conference “humanized the field” of psychology for him. He continued to say that “as an undergraduate, [he] had a perception of researchers and scholars being these incredible, brilliant people that were very unlike [himself] or any professor [he] knew. However, at the conference they seem just like “normal people.” He explained this by saying that the conference “made research, and the people doing the research, seem much more real, relatable, and accessible.” In Dr. Guenther’s experience, having the opportunity to talk to researchers candidly and to hear about their projects helped him see that research was something he could do, too. The conference offers students a concrete image of what a researcher is like and what researchers do, which can help guide students’ paths in the field of psychology.

Typically, the conference provides a bit of a time conflict for Creighton students and faculty, as it usually falls during Creighton’s finals week. However, this year the 86th annual meeting falls during the weekend before finals week. It will be held in Chicago from May 1–3. Per usual, many Creighton Psychology Department faculty will be attending, including Dr. Stairs, Dr. Guenther, Dr. Budesheim, Dr. Leak, and Dr. Klanecky, along with many of their research assistants. As regular attendees of the conference, it is clear that many Creighton faculty view it as a valuable conference. It offers their students an opportunity to see research in the real world.
The New Kid on the Block

By Salvatore Leone

The newest member of the Psychology Department, Dr. Joshua Fairchild, joined the Creighton community for the 2013 fall semester. Fairchild, originally from New Haven, earned his Bachelor of Arts in 2007 from the University of Connecticut, majoring in psychology with a minor in neuroscience. He went on to earn his master's degree and Ph.D. in industrial-organizational (I/O) psychology from Penn State in 2013, where his research interests included creativity, teamwork, and leadership in organizations. During his graduate studies, his dissertation explored the effects of leadership changes on team membership and team creativity, a topic he is still interested in exploring.

Since moving to Omaha and adopting a cat named “Pumpkin,” Dr. Fairchild has already taught Research Methods and Organizational Psychology. He is planning to teach more I/O psychology courses in the coming semesters such as Group Dynamics and Industrial Psychology, two courses he is very excited to teach. Fairchild worked on six different research projects in less than six months. With each new project, the team explores a different facet of creativity within organizations. Moving forward, Fairchild’s research interests include looking at the role of social media in enhancing organizational creativity and investigating factors that influence how people evaluate creative ideas. Fairchild has a passion for research. When asked about his favorite part of Creighton, he replied, “It’s really great being able to work with students. We have an awesome research lab, and the seven students working with me are fantastic. It’s been great being able to be so involved with students working on research projects together.” Team Fairchild is also currently collaborating with a local advertising agency to better evaluate creativity within the organization.

Finally, Dr. Fairchild left us with some tips for students interested in I/O psychology: “Students who are interested should definitely try to get involved in research – it’s probably the most critical thing they can do to prepare for graduate school. Another thing is to not be afraid to ask questions of people who are already in the field – I/O is a really small field, and most people tend to be pretty friendly! If you want to know more about what I/O psychologists do, or if you just want to know more about a particular school, many people would be happy to talk with you.”

Surviving Senior Year: From the Survivors’ Perspectives

By Erin Woolman

Senior year is a turning point in a college student’s life that involves stressful social and academic pressures. Rachel Meisinger and Karen Vanderzanden are two Creighton psychology graduates who gave us a few tips on surviving that final year of college. The first tip: Time management is an important factor in completing schoolwork, searching for jobs, and maintaining a social life. If you are not organized and do not use your time wisely, it can have very negative consequences.

Rachel says to spend as much time with your friends as possible. “Before you know it, you will be graduated and busy with graduate school or work.” Your friends are the ones who will be there to support you through everything so you need to keep those relationships intact.

The second tip: Use your resources. “By this time you have likely established relationships with professors so don’t be afraid to ask them questions regarding academics or post-graduation opportunities,” Rachel said. Take advantage of these relationships and appreciate what your professors have taught you. Ask them to write reference letters for you because you may need them in the future. “Don’t blow off your classes but realize that B’s are okay,” says Karen. Also, try not to be overcome with senioritis. Karen encourages us, “As long as you keep trying your best, everything will turn out fine.”

The third tip: Don’t stress about things you can’t change. You cannot, even though you may want to, go back to freshman year and get a better grade in those classes that brought down your GPA. You don’t have to be perfect and you don’t have to have your whole life figured out either. “Your first job is not necessarily the job you’d have for the rest of your life,” urges Karen. Whether you’re waiting to hear back from a graduate school or a job, just know that everything will work out for the best in the end.

Last, but certainly not least: Take advantage of the present and look toward the future. Attend your graduation ceremony. You’ve earned this and you deserve to be recognized for your accomplishments. Karen advises to go to the Psi Chi/Psychology Department events. As a psychology student, you will benefit from attending these events within the department. Attend all of the events that you can! From sports games to charity events, make the most of your time left here. Last, look forward to the future but live in the present. Use what you have learned to make a difference in the world and be the best you can be. Enjoy every minute of your time left here because it will be gone before you know it.


By Jared Ruchensky

Considering Dr. Huss’ ability to mentor, teach and inspire, it is perhaps not surprising that he was given the 2013 Nebraska Professor of the Year award. Dr. Huss is infamous for his ability to hold the attention of a classroom with his enthusiasm and humor. As a forensic psychologist, he consistently challenges students to examine the real life impact of the interaction of psychology and the law by providing an ample amount of complicated and realistic scenarios. Dr. Huss continues to push students to look at issues from a variety of perspectives and emphasizes the development of skills that students many times have not had the opportunity to hone, such as creating personal statements for graduate school. He knows, from his own experience as a student and from his years of teaching, exactly what areas students need to improve for success in the real world and graduate school.

Dr. Huss is also an ideal mentor. He challenges his research assistants to extend themselves beyond what is required. Dr. Huss invests a significant amount of time guiding students through the scientific process, thereby developing tools that increase success in graduate school. He genuinely cares that his students do well. From personal experience, I can recall working with him and other students for weeks on revising a conference proposal. Dr. Huss even stayed up late the night it was due to ensure we submitted a proposal, which was, with his guidance, selected for presentation. These opportunities are rare as an undergraduate, and signify the level of achievement Dr. Huss inspires in his students.

Dr. Huss also demonstrates a significant concern for students. He encourages students to take advantage of his open door policy, and is easily found in his office. He is always open to meeting with students about what classes to take, how to get into graduate school, and any other life concerns. He has helped me, and countless other students, explore our own academic and career interests. I can honestly say Dr. Huss has played a significant role in my personal and professional development while at Creighton and, for that, I will always count myself lucky for getting to work with him.
Matt Huss
Dustin Stairs
Laura Finken
Gary Leak
Alicia Klanecky
Joshua Fairchild
James Lupo
Amy Badura
Brack
Corey Guenther
Jill Brown
Maya Khanna
Lee Budeshime
Rhonda Kodad

1. Matthew Huss
2. Dustin Stairs
3. Laura Finken
4. Gary Leak
5. Alicia Klanecky
6. Joshua Fairchild
7. James Lupo
8. Amy Badura
9. Brack
10. Corey Guenther
11. Jill Brown
12. Maya Khanna
13. Lee Budeshime
14. Rhonda Kodad

**“Stop Reading My Mind!”**

By Timothy McDermott

During a recent trip to the movie theater, I was able to see the portrayal of a clinical psychologist in the film, Anchorman 2: The Legend Continues. Unfortunately, this clinical psychologist was not an accurate portrayal of the profession. Portrayed by Greg Kinnear, the only information we are directly given is that his name is Gary, and that he is a successful clinical psychologist in New York. Since the movie takes place in the ’70s, we get a comical stereotype of how a psychologist might look and act during this time period. Gary has a liberal attitude and wears his hair in a ponytail. He acts pompous and carries himself in a manner that we would expect of a new age humanist. When Gary first tells Ron Burgundy (the protagonist) that he is a psychologist, Ron responds by asking if Gary is “reading his mind.” Gary looks at Ron with a sharp stare and asks, “Do you even know what a psychologist is?” Although Kinnear’s character was meant to be part of the comedy of the film, I think that this scene brings up an important point. I would like to ask the same question to the popular media. Do you even know what a psychologist is?

Clinical psychologists are licensed specialists who are trained in the assessment, treatment and prevention of psychological disorders. They hold a doctoral degree in clinical psychology. Clinical psychologists are trained mental health professionals who can conduct scientific research, engage in clinical work, and pursue administrative positions. Contrary to Kinnear’s portrayal in Anchorman 2, clinical psychologists do not read minds or use psychic powers.

Another portrayal of a clinical psychologist in the media is Dr. Paul Weston from the fictional HBO drama series, In Treatment. Dr. Weston, portrayed by Gabriel Byrne, is a clinical psychologist who conducts therapy in private practice. Each episode of the program features one of his psychotherapy sessions with a client, and the show follows the same clients throughout each season. This show aired on HBO from 2008-2010 for a total of 3 seasons. Weston views himself as a professional, and prioritizes empathy and trust in his therapeutic relationships. Paul is a fine representation of a clinical psychologist, but not without some inaccuracies. His approach to therapy is primarily conducted from a psychoanalytic perspective. In the past, psychoanalysis may have been the primary method for psychotherapy, but with increased research showing the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and eclectic approaches (a combination of multiple therapeutic perspectives), most practitioners are moving away from an exclusively psychoanalytic approach. Additionally, Paul never conducts psychoanalytic treatments and he also acts unethically at times. These are both examples of actions that a well-trained scientist-practitioner would not be doing. Still, it seems to me that Dr. Paul Weston is the best that the media has right now.

It seems that the media has yet to figure out how to accurately portray mental health professionals. Fictional portrayals of therapists are usually far from the actual truth. Hopefully, as the general public becomes more informed, the media portrayal of clinical psychologists will improve. It is also important for the media to acknowledge that not all mental health therapists are clinical psychologists. For example, many mental health therapists have their doctoral or master’s degree in social work, counseling, or marriage and family therapy. These degrees have different emphases, but they all can lead to professional careers conducting therapy.

**Dr. Khanna’s Cognitive Research**

By Dalton Bourke

Dr. Maya Khanna, Ph.D., of Creighton University is an expert in cognitive and developmental psychology. Her main focus is in the development of reading and cognitive skills as well as the understanding of memory processing.

This article will focus on one of Dr. Khanna’s more recent experiments designed to understand the adverse cognitive effects when children are exposed to lead in their environment.

Recently, Dr. Khanna conducted an experiment to discover the relationship between lead exposure and subsequent negative performance on cognitive tasks. Dr. Khanna became interested in this area through the Omaha Healthy Kids Alliance and in discovering that the eastern Omaha community lies within the largest of the EPA-designated Lead Super Fund Sites. Dr. Khanna expressed that this part of the community, lying within the Super Fund Site, has some of the highest rates of special education and juvenile delinquency. Although she admits this effect may be related to socioeconomic realities, she believes it is also related to lead exposure. Lead exposure is detrimental to executive functioning (i.e. frontal lobe functioning that severely affects working memory, planning and attention) as well as reading readiness. Dr. Khanna’s experiment focused on children within 3-6 years of age and was the first study to be done on this age group. From the experiment, she found that only boys show significant atrophy in the prefrontal cortex as measured by tests focused on executive functioning and reading readiness. It is suggested that the cognitive function of females is protected from lead exposure due to possible neuroprotectant effects of typical female hormones (e.g. estrogen and estradiol) against neurotoxins such as lead. This study suggests that exposure to lead does contribute to deleterious prefrontal cortex development in boys and that future studies need to be done to better understand how lead exposure may be associated with varying deficits in males and females.

**Interested in supporting student research?**

Promoting student research opportunities is a priority for the Psychology Department and for Creighton as a whole. Please consider making a contribution to the Dahl Fund, which enables psychology students to apply for funds to present their research at other institutions. Contact Dr. Matt Huss at mhuss@creighton.edu about contributions.

Thank you!
Psi Chi Annual Update

By Biz Hall

Psi Chi, the National Honor Society in Psychology, had a productive start to the 2013-2014 academic year under its new executive team: Jared Ruchensky (president), Robin Strominger (vice president), Alan Buttars (secretary), Olivia Babe (treasurer), and Elizabeth Hall (Historian). This year, Psi Chi wanted to provide more applicable resources for those interested in psychology.

With that goal in mind, Psi Chi hosted their second annual Career Panel. The panel was comprised of community members representing career options in psychology outside of academia, including positions that do not require a graduate degree. The panel consisted of social workers, probation officers, a school psychologist, a psychiatrist, and a representative from Boys Town. The event had a great turnout from not only Psi Chi members, but also psychology majors wanting to know more about potential careers. Psi Chi was excited to see a full house with students that were eager to participate and had great questions for our guests. In all, this has been one of Psi Chi’s most successful programs.

Psi Chi also hosted a holiday party in the Psychology Department. The event facilitated an environment for students and professors to socialize while also enjoying cookies and punch. Additionally, the organization initiated 18 new members in December. The new and current members, as well as faculty, celebrated at Old Chicago in the Old Market.

Psi Chi also plans to apply for the Model Chapter Award at the end of this academic year. To receive this award, the organization must document chapter participation in at least one service project, a regional convention or undergraduate research conference, and the Psi Chi awards/grants program, as well as conduct at least one induction during the year. The organization is currently seeking a service project to meet these requirements. If Psi Chi achieves the Model Chapter Award, the chapter will be given an extra $100 for next year. The award is given to chapters who provide psychology-related opportunities to members, demonstrate teamwork and serve the community.


Answer key: 1=k, 2=i, 3=h, 4=m, 5=d, 6=c, 7=l, 8=g, 9=e, 10=j, 11=f, 12=b, 13=a