

POINTS OF INTEREST

- **NEW Neuropsychology** minor spikes enthusiasm
- **Say Hello to Dr. Brown and Dr. Stairs**
- **Summer research grants** provide research opportunities for students
- **Psi Chi Honors Society and NEW Psychology Club** report on 07-08

The Dahl Fund

We have reached the time of year to consider donations for the Dahl Fund, which sponsors undergraduate research.

Enclosed is an addressed envelope for your contributions. Any donation is acceptable and appreciated.

Thank you for your support!

Calling All Psychology Alumni!

We're looking for you! Stay in touch with former graduates, friends, and professors!

Visit:
<https://people.creighton.edu/~ldc24708/>

And click on *Insight* at the bottom of the page!

Jesuit Values: In the Classroom and Beyond

By Gerard Forbes

Each student at Creighton University is called, within the first week, to not only understand the core Jesuit values but also live them and exercise them in their everyday life. The real question is, under what circumstances do these values extend outside the place where they are taught? For many students these values end up taking a back seat to studying during the week and recovering from a barrage of papers and tests during the weekend. Where does one find time to practice these values? The psychology department has found a way to integrate a particular value directly into the education it provides to Creighton Students.

The value the Psychology Department has embraced is serving others. For example, each Student that enrolls in Infant and Child Development is required to spend sixteen hours volunteering at an elementary school or other child care provider during the semester. Some students spend their time on campus with the children and infants at the Russell Child Care Center. Others are placed at the Jewish community center and still others are placed at an elementary school through Camp Fire USA. The Department's work with Camp Fire USA is a prime example of the exercising of Jesuit Values outside of the Creighton community.

Camp Fire USA works many schools that serve an underprivileged student population. The organization strives to provide these children with nutrition, a safe place to



Freshman Hannah Novoa works with preschoolers at Russell Child Development Center on Creighton's campus. Students enrolled in Infant and Child Development supplement classroom work with volunteering at various sites as part of their grade.

play and a safe place to learn. The Creighton Psychology students that work with Camp Fire USA assist in making this happen. Before any activities start the elementary school children are provided with a nutritious meal. The volunteering Creighton student assists with

"It is a good feeling; providing the children with a positive, safe environment outside of their homes."

-Tim Barth, '09

making sure that every child receives a plate and of course makes sure that everyone is following the rules and being safe. After snack time Creighton students help the children with their homework. After homework the students participate in a number of different activities. These activities include creative writing, chess, mad science and

discovery club, which teaches anything from the importance of listening to the value of true friends.

It is in these activities at the end of the day that Creighton students can closely relate to the students and not only provide service but also show the children that someone cares. Junior Tim Barth described the experience as being very valuable saying, "It is a good feeling; providing the children with a positive, safe environment outside of their homes." It is clear that the children really appreciate the presence of the Creighton volunteer and that the service is much appreciated by parents, teachers and children alike. By providing service to others, psychology students have spread Jesuit Values throughout Omaha.

What Can Dr. Brown Do for You?

By Sarah Norris

This fall, the faculty of Creighton's Psychology Department welcomed Dr. Jill Brown as a new assistant professor. Dr. Brown is a Nebraska native, but don't let that fool you—she is quite the world traveler! The first time I stepped into her office, I immediately noticed a multitude of African cultural decorations, and several pictures of family and friends. Here at Creighton, students have enjoyed taking Dr. Brown for several courses, including Multicultural Psychology and Research Methods and Statistics II.

Born in Minden, Nebraska, Dr. Brown graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After college, she dedicated two years to joining the Peace Corps. Dr. Brown describes her decision to make this commitment by explaining "I wanted to [better] understand myself and where I was from." She considers it an advantageous opportunity to learn how people live in other areas, especially those very different from her



Dr. Jill Brown (pictured here in Nepal) has enjoyed bringing her international experiences to the classroom.

more rural hometown. In 1996, Dr. Brown was assigned to live in a tiny rural town in Namibia, the country just northwest of South Africa. In this village, she worked with youth development and young adults who were unemployed and out of school, and also with HIV/AIDS prevention.

Feeling a calling in Africa, Dr. Brown spent another year in Africa for UNICEF (United Nations Chil-

dren's Fund). She spent this time living with the same family in a single-room home. She described this experience as being very different but extremely powerful. She laughed when telling me a story about the lack of privacy, and how the family she was living with didn't seem to understand why she would ever want to spend time alone. This was just one of the ways the two cultures showed their differences! Dr. Brown shared how she grew very close to the family she lived with, and the rest of the people she was with in Namibia.

After working on her doctorate, Dr. Brown returned to Africa after applying for a grant to study AIDS and masculinity. Her research interests are very developmental-culturally specific. In Africa she researched child fosterage, which is the popular tradition of "giving" a child to another family member or friend to raise as their own. She also spoke with many

African mothers about their children, learning what they hoped for their children's futures. While in Africa, Dr. Brown learned of an opening to teach at Creighton, and after finishing her doctorate, began her current position.

Dr. Brown lives with her husband, and 2 year-old daughter, Naala (which means "girl born with all sisters"). She enjoys traveling, playing softball, and designing many of her own clothes. If you are ever wandering around in the Psychology Department, I would definitely recommend dropping by Dr. Brown's office and asking about her travels to Africa, or even stories from studying Creative Writing in India!

The students, faculty, and staff in the Psychology Department are truly grateful to have Dr. Brown as a new addition. Her friendly smile and warm personality have made her an approachable professor to all students, and an admirable colleague to the faculty. Welcome to Creighton, Dr. Brown!

FACULTY SPOTLIGHTS

Dr. Ware Retires

Dr. Mark Ware will be retiring this spring, ending a career at Creighton University that began in 1965. He looks forward to spending more time volunteering and working with his hobbies, including stained glass. (Please refer to last year's issue of *Inpsyght* for a complete story, at <http://puffin.creighton.edu/psy/Inpsyght.htm>.)

The psychology Department wishes Dr. Ware the best of luck and hopes he enjoys a wonderful retirement!



Good Luck Dr. Ware!

Dr. Stairs: Stepping Up to Higher Education

By Brett Gilcrist

Dr. Stairs, a self-made millionaire. Well, not quite.

Although he may not have millions of dollars to his name, Dustin Stairs has proven himself to be hard-working, dedicated to his education and the education of others.

While most students might feel discouraged by a less than perfect GRE score, Dr. Stairs saw it as an opportunity to challenge himself. He recognized the road would be tougher, but this former Secondary Education major believed in himself and the desire he had to teach at the collegiate level.

After completing a Master's degree at the University of North Carolina-Wilmington (UNCW), Dr. Stairs attended a Ph.D. program at the University of Kentucky (UK). Stairs was urged to attend these programs by professors in the Psychology Department at his alma-mater South Dakota State University (SDSU), who believed he could do more than simply teach high school psychology courses.

His advisor's high expectations and astounding workloads helped Dr. Stairs make a smoother transition to the doctoral program

at UK, where he studied Experimental Psychology with an emphasis in Behavioral Neuroscience Psychopharmacology. These areas of study led Dr. Stairs to focus his research on the use of animal models to study the biological bases of drug abuse. Research in his laboratory focuses on the reinforcing properties and subjective effects of stimulant drugs.

Interested students assist in the daily handling and care of animals in Stairs' research. Students also obtain hands on experience with numerous behavioral pharmacology techniques.

Dr. Stairs noted that the best surprise in his experience of Creighton so far is the caliber of the student body, from freshmen through seniors; he was surprised at the intelligence and ingenuity of our students. On the other hand, he was also surprised by all the little things that fill up his day like responding to emails and filling out paperwork.

Nonetheless, he welcomes these challenges and hopes to overcome them in the future, as he turns his attention to more important things like maintaining a high level of productivity in his field



Dr. Dustin Stairs never fails to bring energy to the classroom.

through research, publication, and hopefully, the mentoring of undergraduate students into graduate school.

Finally, Dr. Stairs offered this advice for people who think they might attend professional school: (1) Match your interests to a professor's interests and get involved early in that individual's research, and (2) Follow your heart and your interests when picking a program of study.

Neuropsychology Minor Mingles Natural, Social Sciences

By Dan Runco

Psychology. Biology. Chemistry. Physiology. What do all of these things have in common? They have found a new home in Creighton University Department of Psychology.

The College of Arts and Sciences has recently enacted minors into its curriculum affecting many departments on campus. The Psychology Department is providing innovative leadership by not only providing a minor course of study, but by making it interdisciplinary in nature.

The Neuropsychology Minor requires eighteen credit hours. Students are required to complete Introductory Psychology, Psychological Statistics, and Physiological Psychology. Beyond those courses, three additional courses with a combined study of the physiologi-

cal aspects of psychology with the cognitive and associative aspects are mandatory. The three classes may be chosen from Neuropsychology, Sensation and Perception, Drugs and Behavior, Psychology of Memory, Cognitive Psychology, and Learning: Basic Processes.

The new minor has attracted many different students to the department, including Sarah Fredrick, a junior Chemistry major from Fort Collins, CO. Sarah plans on pursuing graduate studies in chemistry after



Creighton's neuropsychology minor offers students an interdisciplinary approach to psychology. Image courtesy of Gray's Anatomy, public domain.

finishing her time at Creighton.

The Neuropsychology Minor appealed to Sarah because she "was interested in how chemistry and psychology were being united in brain research." Integrating these two disciplines into her undergraduate studies has allowed her to broaden her ideas for gradu-

ate studies in chemistry. Of the psychology courses she has taken, Sarah has particularly enjoyed

Drugs and Behavior and Cognitive Psychology. Both courses integrated psychological research with physiological aspects and were very contemporary issues. Most importantly, however, is how welcoming the psychology faculty have been for the new students. "All of the faculty members I have had contact with have been nothing but friendly and helpful. I have also enjoyed the students who have been in the same classes as me," said Sarah.

It is safe to say that the psychology department is on the move, creating new programs, incorporating undergraduates from many different disciplines, and providing an integrated and contemporary study of psychology. The Neuropsychology minor is simply a small piece of the puzzle.

Psychology Professor "Of the Year"

By Kate McKillip

Dr. Isabelle Cherney, associate professor of psychology at Creighton, was recently awarded the Carnegie Foundation's Professor of the Year award for the State of Nebraska. She received the award in Washington D.C., and the award was also highlighted on a billboard overlooking the 24th and Burt Street intersection. Recently, Dr. Cherney also received the Dean's Award for Professional Excellence in Tenure-Track Teaching.

Dr. Cherney says she tries to "foster an environment of challenge where, as an agent of change, [she] can provide both the catalyst and guidance necessary for learning to occur." She also said she was grateful to be able to go to the nation's capitol and to highlight Creighton's excellence in teaching.

This award reflects the great educational opportunities that are available at Creighton. Congratulations Dr. Cherney!

Research Gives Students Competitive Edge

By Tara Singhal

Undergraduate students majoring in psychology have so many things going on that they rarely have time to do outside research, right? Definitely not. Students at Creighton University are dedicated to investigating their areas of interest and those of mentoring professors. Specifically, Jess Dempsey and Brett Gilchrist have contributed a great deal of time performing research on top of their regular class load. Working closely with Dr. Isabelle Cherney and Lynsey Rangel, Jess has focused on children's play, examining the role of gender stereotypes and play complexity. This work earned Jess a Creighton University Summer Research Scholarship to investigate further the play complexity in three- to five-year-old children. She attended the Cognitive Development Society Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico and the Nebraska Psychological Society Conference to present on her play laboratory studies. This semester Jess and Brett both attended the Great Plains student research conference to give oral presentations. Under the supervision of Dr. Huss, Brett conducted a study analyzing the factors that affect mock jurors' decisions in a Sexually Violent Predator (SVP) hearing. Due to the quality of his work, Brett received a summer

research grant from Psi Chi to continue his research.

Since they have been conducting research, The Dahl Fund has been a great supplement to presenting at conferences. It was established to support undergraduate research by helping deserving students to have the opportunity to travel and participate in professional conferences. Jess commented, "The Dahl Fund is beneficial because it encourages more students to take that next step and go to a conference to share their projects. It allows students to attend these conferences and share their hard work without having to spend their own money on meals, plus they gain vital experience in presenting their psychological research." Jess and Brett believe their experience in researching has been very positive because they gained a wider range of knowledge in the field of psychology. Brett remarked, "Being a research assistant helped me adjust from a major in education to a major in psychology; I easily became integrated into the rest of the department, forming connections with many professors and students." Research has allowed both these students to dedicate themselves to a topic of interest and contribute something to a field that has meant so much to them.



Dr. Isabelle Cherney's accomplishments were celebrated on a billboard on the north side of Campus, overlooking 24th Street.

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.

Thank you!

Creighton UNIVERSITY

Department of Psychology

Creighton University

2500 California Plaza

Omaha, NE 68178

We're on the Web!

Puffin.creighton.edu/psy/

Clubs for Everyone: PSI CHI President Reports

By Jessica Dempsey

Creighton University's chapter of Psi Chi, the National Honors Society in Psychology, had a very successful 2007-2008 academic year! We began the year with a philanthropy event by participating in a walk at Lake Zorinsky to raise money for leukemia research. Many members of Psi Chi participated and we had a great night with perfect weather.

We also had various social events during the fall semester, including an ice cream social in the psychology department, the annual fall picnic, and the Christmas party hosted by Dr. Badura Brack. Several faculty members and numerous students attended the Christmas party and we successfully gathered a table full of toys to donate to "Toys for Tots."

In November, we inducted seven new members into Psi Chi. The ceremony took place in Hixson-Lied and dinner followed at Old Chicago. In the spring, we also inducted new members during the Honors Banquet Ceremony at Le Silo Mio.



Psi Chi members Katy Lang, Jaime Lang, and Lisa Wolf enjoy decorating pumpkins at the annual fall picnic.

In addition to social and philanthropy events, Psi Chi members are busy staying involved in undergraduate research opportunities. Psi Chi is founded in scholarship and Psi Chi members are clearly showing their dedication to the field of psychology by their attendance at numerous conferences to present their research. In the fall, students attended the

Cognitive Development Conference in Santa Fe, New Mexico and the Nebraska Psychological Society conference at Doane College, in Nebraska. During the spring semester, students were busy traveling to the Great Plains conference, which was held at Emporia State University.

During the spring semester, we continued with our service

projects, fundraising, and social events. In addition to the annual "Psychology Bowl," where students face off to find which team knows the most about psychology, we also held a bake sale, which raised around 70 dollars, and sold around 50 psychology shirts that read "I'm Analyzing You."

This year, we are excited to have implemented a "Psychology Club" through our department. This organization is in conjunction with Psi Chi, but allows more students, both those who are psychology majors and those who are not, to participate in psychology-related activities. This is especially aimed at freshmen and sophomores who are not yet eligible to join Psi Chi and is a way for undergrads to get to know the faculty and upperclassmen students. Psychology club members were invited to all our service projects, the fall picnic, ice cream social, and "Psychology Bowl." We have had a very successful year in Psi Chi and wish luck to the new officers of Psi Chi for 2008-2009 and to all the graduating seniors as they begin their new endeavors.