

## POINTS OF INTEREST

- Meet the department's adjunct faculty
- Undergraduates take learning outside of the classroom
- Psi Chi pioneers a new role in the department

### The Dahl Fund

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

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## Faculty, students plug into innovative technology

By Joseph Chen

From the use of game consoles in research to recording lectures onto software programs, Creighton's psychology department is expanding its use of technology to students in both classroom and research settings.

One example of the expanding use of technology in the classroom can be found in Dr. Dustin Stairs' Learning: Basic Processes class. A big focus of the class is on behavioral principles such as classical and operant conditioning. This year as part of the class, Dr. Stairs used a computer software program called "CyberRat," where students downloaded a program and ran behavioral experiments on computer laboratory rats. Dr. Stairs decided to implement outside assignments on CyberRat saying, "I wanted the students to have a valuable experience in understanding the various concepts of learning such as extinction and reinforcement of behavior." In addition, he hopes to ultimately help the students tie in classroom concepts with these web assignments. Dr. Stairs will continue to use this program in future classes.

Dr. Amy Badura Brack is also utilizing new technology as part of her teaching method. She is currently part of the eFellows Program for the 2010-2011 academic year, which supports professors' efforts in integrating technology into the classroom. Through this program, she has started to create a website where she can post class content, lectures and video clips accessible to her students. Dr. Badura Brack is excited to implement more technology into her courses and has also started using Bluecast,

a lecture capture system that allows professors to record their lectures and stream them online for students to use. Bluecast records both audio and video of the lecture, as well as any presentation materials used by the professor. Through the use of the latest technology, Dr. Badura Brack hopes to make learning more convenient while still maintaining high-quality instruction.

While the use of technology is expanding in the classroom setting, it is also making its way into the research scene. During the fall semester of 2009, Creighton's

psychology department began to implement Sona System, an online research management system that allows students to sign up for research participation through the internet. The Sona System makes it easier for experimenters to keep track of sign-ups and issue credit for those who participated. Sona is currently being used by professors and student researchers alike.

One specific study that



Psychology senior Joe Smetter runs a subject through through the gaming condition of his spatial skills study.

incorporated the latest technology was completed during the summer of 2010 by senior psychology majors Joe Smetter and Kyle Bersted. Under the supervision of Dr. Isabelle Cherney, Smetter and Bersted implemented a research project that used gaming systems like Nintendo Wii and Gamecube to examine the acquisition of spatial skills.

"I think it is important to remember that even though we as humans create and shape technology, technology also shapes us. Furthermore, technology is constantly growing and changing, and psychological research needs to keep up," Smetter said.

# Adjunct faculty add color to the department

By Kitzi Hendricks

You may see these faces as you walk down the halls of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Hixson-Lied. These are the faces of the Department of Psychology's beloved adjunct faculty members. Although they may not be full-time psychology faculty, their work and dedication to the students and faculty do not go unnoticed and their individual efforts contribute to the continued strength of the psychology department. Here is a little bit more information on each of the adjunct faculty members.

**Dave Van Dyke** Van Dyke's experiences in the medical field led him to pursue Industrial/Organizational Psychology as a life-long career. He feels fortunate to



be able to call the talented and caring members of the department his colleagues. After taking 10 years off from teaching, he is glad to have made the time to reenter the classroom. Van Dyke is fascinated by the intelligence of his students. He appreciates the caring and dedicated group of students who are serious about developing themselves so that they can serve others. While teaching is not always easy, he believes that the challenges are always rewarding. When he's not teaching, you can find him working and enjoying statistics. He has a full-time consulting practice that takes up the vast majority of his time and that he truly enjoys. He also enjoys photography.

**Georges** Georges graduated from Creighton in 2006 and started in the graduate program in Psychology and Law at UNL right after graduation. She received a Masters of Legal Studies (MLS) from UNL's College of Law and is in the final stages of completing her doctorate degree in social



psychology. She is specifically interested in the role of emotions in legal decision-making and how these emotions affect the judges, jurors, court systems, and justice system. Her favorite part about being an adjunct faculty member is the energy that comes from both a supportive faculty and the students. Some of her best research ideas come from student thoughts and questions. When she is not in Hixson-Lied, you can find her spending most of her time finishing her degree at UNL and preparing to become a full-time professor. Georges spends her little free time with her husband, Jesse, and St. Bernard, Bigsby. As for hidden talents, she plays a mean fiddle and can tell you anything you need to know about Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

**Beth Johnson** After receiving her undergraduate degree from Hendrix College, Johnson completed her masters degree and began working on her doctorate at UNL. She specializes in social psychology, although she enjoys research methods and statistics, too. The things she likes the best about the Creighton student body are that so many students are not afraid to learn and are truly enthusiastic about psychology. It

makes teaching a joy because she can trust the students, allowing her to fully share her excitement about psychology. When she is not in the department, Johnson can be



found at the YMCA or at home doing work. Unfortunately, a fair amount of time in her day is spent on the highway back and forth from Lincoln to Omaha. But what about her hidden talents? It's been said that she is a great cook and uses the vegetables and herbs that she has grown in her garden. Have more questions? You can find her in 306!

**Debra Schwiesow** Schwiesow is a full-time school psychologist and has been teaching at Creighton for 21 years. She completed her undergraduate work at the University of Kansas and her



graduate studies at UNO. She is especially interested in school psychology and how the application of solid psychological

principles and research can create a successful education for all students. She truly enjoys the energy and enthusiasm she receives from the students she meets and appreciates the opportunity to blend her teaching with her work experience. She is thrilled when students who have never heard of school psychology as undergraduates go into the field and become her colleagues. When she is not spending time in the halls of Hixson-Lied, you can find her spending time with her husband, son, and two Cocker Spaniels. She also enjoys yoga, singing, and playing the piano.

**Gene Walker** Walker transferred to Creighton as a student from Iowa Western Community College in 1983 and never left. He is interested in real-life psychology and loves that being an adjunct



faculty member enables him to skip out on the meetings (what a rebel) and just enjoy being in the classroom. One of the things that fascinates him about Creighton students is that they are still interested in learning for the sake of learning and are genuinely interested in improving the human condition. He is open with his long-term disabilities and utilizes his life experiences to bring knowledge to the classroom. When he is not in the classroom or hiding out in 315, you can find him helping others with end-of-life issues, enjoying his extensive movie and music collection, and reading horror literature.

## Learning outside the box: Classrooms expand into the Omaha community

By Molli Budd

Whether it is through internships, a refugee apartment setup, or learning about and applying the art of snooping, the psychology department provides many opportunities to apply class concepts and learn outside of Creighton's classrooms.

One unique, enriching opportunity, provided by Dr. Jill Brown's Multicultural Psychology class, is a refugee apartment setup. During the fall of 2010, Dr. Brown's class collaborated to gather an assortment of necessities such as furniture, kitchen utensils, and electronics for a Karen refugee family from Burma. Not only did the students work to clean and arrange the apartment, but they also learned about the turmoil that exists in Burma as a result of the ongoing civil war and what life is like for a refugee. The class met the family at the airport and brought them to their apartment in the Karen community. There, the class also partook in a Karen welcoming prayer ceremony for the family, during which they sang songs and prayed in unison. Students considered it a very enlightening



**Multicultural Psychology student NAME plays with the daughter of the Karen refugee family that Dr. Jill Brown's class helped welcome to their new Omaha home. Photo courtesy of Dr. Jill Brown**

experience and it brought a lot of class themes to life.

Dr. Corey Guenther's Psychology of Personality class further exemplifies taking psychology outside of the classroom by reading the book *Snoop: What Your Stuff Says About You* by Sam Gosling. Students applied "the art

of snoop" to understand more about a person from items in their environment that may seem simple or unintentional. For example a bedroom or a Facebook page can give clues to an individual's personality.

Internships are also a great way for students to take

psychology beyond the classroom. Senior psychology majors Marc Rizzo and Maggie Kennedy worked with kids in their internships and are advocates for the learning that comes with experience in the field. Rizzo interned at Behave'n Day Center, a treatment center for children with behavioral problems. The facility serves as a day clinic that utilizes behavior modification and onsite therapy to aid children and families in resolving their issues. Rizzo found that patience is required when working with children and one must be able to adapt to the personality, problems and dynamics unique to each situation: skills that an internship facilitates. Kennedy also had the opportunity to develop these skills by working with children at her internship site, Woodrow Wilson Middle School. In this role, she worked one-on-one with students, discussing school, friend and home issues and setting goals to resolve them. Kennedy said, "I learned a lot about counseling and improving my methods on my own. It was a great learning opportunity to see what goes on in a counseling center, and I was able to sit in on some counseling appointments with my supervisor."

## Alumni find multi-faceted applications of their psychology degrees

By Maggie Kennedy

With graduation looming only a short time away for seniors, the anxieties of next year's plans are heightening. However, while many seniors think that their only option with a psychology degree in this economy is graduate school, recent graduates have shown differently.

According to Jordan Finnegan, a recent Creighton graduate who now works in the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs in Washington D.C., having experience in the real world can be

very beneficial to graduating seniors. Finnegan claims that she has learned to apply her psychology degree through putting her knowledge, or what she deems as the psychology student's "sixth sense," to use. She now works as a liaison between state and local elected officials, looking at policies and seeing how they affect people on a larger level. Finnegan says that her psychology degree has helped her "to be a rational thinker in a world where things can get very heated."

Sarah Scott is another recent

graduate who works at a psychiatric hospital in downtown Omaha as a behavioral services tech and just finished her Masters in Social Work. Scott says that talking to professors about options for graduate school and/or jobs is a great resource. Scott says that her "top-notch education" at Creighton not only served as a requirement for her current job but also helped in graduate school as well, proving that a psychology degree from Creighton extends far beyond the field of psychology.

Marc Rizzo, a current senior psychology major, says he feels prepared to enter either graduate school or the real world, but is planning to attend graduate school. His main concerns are finding, adjusting, and affording the right school, common concerns for any who decide to continue on to graduate school.

Senior psychology major Kindra Seifert is planning to attend the Maryknoll Language Institute in Bolivia to improve her conversational Spanish, then hopes to pursue either a law degree or a dual degree program with psychology and law. Seifert says her psychology education "has never limited me to the classroom; it has found a way to help me grow as a person, understand others, and even critically examine the world."

While many seniors are choosing to immediately attend graduate school, recent graduates and some current seniors prove this is not the only option. Instead, choosing to pursue a career in the real world with a psychology degree can be just as viable.

### 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. Corey Guenther at [clg52734@creighton.edu](mailto:clg52734@creighton.edu) about contributions.

**Thank you!**

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We're on the Web!

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## Psi Chi broadens its departmental role

By Hannah Grawe

Psi Chi has a history of encouraging scholarship and achievement in the field of psychology, but that is only part of the organization. With new leaders each year, Psi Chi changes and evolves. For the 2010-2011 school year, the executive members have refocused the society with the hopes of leaving an even more positive legacy in the years to come.

One of the main goals of the executive members this year was to increase event and meeting attendance, as well as boost enthusiasm within the chapter. Nicole Schmidt, Psi Chi Treasurer, said, "Our vision for Psi Chi coming into this year was to get students more involved and excited about the activities going on both in Psi Chi and in the department." To aid in this endeavor, the executives made some changes from previous years. Psi Chi Vice President Emily Adams explained, "This semester we have decided to insert an ice cream social instead of a historically poorly attended volleyball match."

Psi Chi also brought speakers on campus to talk about psychology and mental health. Psi Chi member Joe Smetter was instrumental in inviting peer support specialists from the local organization Community Alliance to speak to the chapter. These

speakers discussed their personal experiences with mental illness and the obstacles they faced. Adams said, "For me, it was an incredibly powerful event. As very privileged students preparing for futures in the mental health field, it was valuable to hear firsthand accounts because learning from a purely academic standpoint



**Psi Chi executive members Emily Adams, Marc Rizzo, and Emily Lien, Psi Chi advisor Dr. Dustin Stairs, and Psi Chi executive member Nicole Schmidt pal around before the fall induction ceremony. Photo courtesy of Emily Adams**

sometimes downplays the real people behind the literature." The speakers offered unique perspectives on mental health, as well as ideas for philanthropy in the future.

In addition to hosting new events, Psi Chi also continued many of its traditions. These included a Family-to-Family

philanthropy event and the annual Christmas party. The Christmas party was hosted by Dr. Corey Guenther and his wife, Libby, and, despite inclement weather, was well attended by faculty and students alike.

Psi Chi also has many plans for the future to increase involvement in the department. For instance, they hope to help majors become successful applicants to graduate schools. Schmidt said, "We hope to hold a student panel on getting more involved in the department, as well as helpful tips for applying to graduate programs in psychology."

At this point in the year, executives are pleased with the positive steps Psi Chi has been taking to move forward. Adams described the effects of some of the changes this year, saying, "I have seen a lot of great connections between people within Psi Chi this year, whether purely academically or as a friendship. I think the energy within the organization has increased immensely, and along with that, so has involvement."