The Gravitational Force of Psychology

By: Vince Flynn

As enrollment numbers at Creighton University continue to increase, so does the size and stature of the Psychology Department. After surpassing the Biology Department in size this semester with 224 majors and 12 minors the department is now the largest major on campus. The likelihood that psychology majors will actually become psychologists is low, so why do so many Creighton University students gravitate toward psychology?

Dr. Thomas Lee Budesheim, the Department Chairperson, believes psychology is a discipline that “captures the mission of the University.” Members of the Creighton community are challenged to become mindful and compassionate individuals who are for and with others, which is exactly what psychology attempts to accomplish. Thus, Introduction to Psychology is being considered as a mandatory requirement in the new core curriculum for the College of Arts and Sciences currently being formulated.

The growing attraction of psychology can also be credited to its applicability in an array of different fields. For instance, the MCAT exam is expected to change to include a social and behavioral science component in 2015, motivating pre-health science students to integrate more psychology courses into their curriculum. Upper level psychology courses like Abnormal Psychology, Cognitive Psychology and Child Development are becoming increasingly appealing, adding to the competitive nature of enrollment in these already high demand classes.

Because of psychology’s widespread popularity across the Creighton community, there are a number of organizational concerns that must be addressed by the Psychology Department. As more students decide to major in psychology, and as more non-majors attempt to enter upper-level courses, class size and the level of student-teacher interaction are just some of the factors that are going to be taken into consideration. Although structural changes may transpire over the next year, Dr. Budesheim and the Psychology Department are determined to “maintain the character of Creighton University.” With great power comes great responsibility.

The Question

By: Brittany Wing

As psychology majors, we all get asked “The Question”; what are you going to do with that degree after college? If there is one thing we learn while pursuing a degree in psychology, it is that the options are infinite and unlimited. A survey of the senior psychology majors demonstrates that there is strong proof that a bachelor’s degree in psychology is extremely versatile, leading to many post-graduate experiences. 42.3% if the senior class plans on attending graduate school to obtain a Master’s degree or a PhD in developmental, industrial, school, counseling or clinical psychology in hopes of finding a career in the fields of therapy, assessment, and research. The second most popular plan is to execute the Jesuit values to the fullest by doing volunteer work with 19.2% of our seniors going into the Peace Corps, Teach For America, various church communities, among many others. 11.5% of psychology seniors are pursuing a degree in medicine and health care after graduation. A significant portion of these students are going to occupational therapy school which is a great application of psychology for personal care. The remaining students plan on continuing or starting an internship, going into the military, working in human resources, or entering the workforce. Clearly, the possibilities are endless for our students. As psychology majors we get the rewarding decision of using our education and talents to serve others and improve society.

To all of the graduating seniors of 2012 preparing for post-graduate adventures, good luck! We cannot wait to see what amazing things you do with your talents and degrees in psychology. fields of therapy, assessment, and research.

POINTS OF INTEREST

• Growth and changes to the Psychology Department
• ProjectWISE joins the Psychology community
• Psi Chi continues to grow and assist the community

THE DAHL FUND

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

Please send your contributions to the Creighton University Office of Development PO Box 30282, Omaha, NE 68103-1382. Checks should be made payable to Creighton University, with the Dahl Fund noted in the memo line.

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In order to better the environment by eliminating paper waste, future issues of InPsyght will be delivered online.

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New Courses Spice up the Psychology Department  
By: Molly Salisbury

There has been a lot of buzz about the three new courses the Psychology Department added to its curriculum. Evolutionary Psychology, Motivation and Emotion, and Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience are being offered for the first time in the department’s history. Many students expressed great interest in each of the courses. Evolutionary Psychology and Motivation and Emotion are now part of the core required for psychology majors. Evolutionary Psychology is a capstone course taught by Dr. Leak. The course explored the different ways that our desires for survival and reproduction play out in our everyday lives. Topics include altruism, mate selection, and aggression among many others. Students lucky enough to take this course have said that it was one of the best courses to take at Creighton. In other classes, we learn about the evolutionary perspective on a certain topic. However, this entire class was taught from an evolutionary perspective and the topics were applicable in everyday life. Dr. Leak is very passionate about Evolutionary Psychology and it shows in every lecture.

Dr. Guenther teaches Motivation and Emotion and the class was a hit! Motivation and Emotion is an experimental/mechanical approach to psychology. Dr. Guenther is very pleased with how well the semester went. The class is challenging and includes a lot of writing but the students really help to facilitate class discussion making the semester a success. Dr. Guenther believes that Motivation and Emotion is “the most fundamental question of what guides behavior. It has a role in everything and is the basis of psychology.” Dr. Guenther is able to draw on both professional and personal experiences. His excitement for motivation and emotion is evident every class. This class could possibly be offered once a year based on student demand.

Dr. Khanna teaches a Contemporary Trends course in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience. While this class may not be offered again, she really enjoyed teaching the course. The seminar style class allows students to explore new research on the edge of understanding. Additionally, they watched video clips of infant behavior and compared different theories which, allowed students to learn about brain development and changes in behavior in children. Neuropsychology and brain development is an area of particular interest to Dr. Khanna, making her the perfect professor to teach this new course. The class drafted National Science Foundation grant proposals, which allows them to see the process where research begins. Dr. Khanna was very pleased with how well the class went and says that many students were engaged in learning more about this unique topic.

As the Psychology Department grows, so does our ability to meet the needs and interests of psychology majors. By offering these new courses, students are able to keep current on cutting edge topics in psychology research while allowing our professors to share their knowledge and interests too.

Psi Chi Update  
By: Jack Erbs

Psi Chi had a lot of exciting activity over the course of the first semester of the 2011-2012 academic year. The organization was very excited to initiate 17 new members at the induction ceremony on December 1st, giving the organization a total of 45 current members. The annual Psi Chi Auction had a high bidding turnout this semester and Junior Taylor Bauman took home the grand prize of a Kaplan Prep Course valued up to $1,999 with the winning bid of $1,300, giving him a $699 discount.

One new initiative that the organization took on this year was to pair with Dr. Brown’s Multicultural Psychology class in their project to set up an apartment for an incoming refugee family. Members were invited to donate products, help move furniture, and be at the airport to welcome the family to Omaha and their new home.

On a different note, President Margo Lorimar graduated from the University this past December to take a position at Boy’s Town. As sad as the organization is to see her move on, the rest of the executive team, Brian Israel (Vice-President), Marie Liesak (Secretary), and Jack Kostal (Treasurer), are confident that the organization will continue to grow and succeed through the remainder of their terms.
Leaking the Truth
By: Kate Grieser

With a nickname like “lesion-monkey” how could a professor not stand out? Dr. Gary Leak has been a professor at Creighton University since 1979 and has made a profound impact on his students and the psychology department. In addition to his teaching, research, and position as associate chairperson, Dr. Leak has a contagious charm that makes him enjoyable to be around. “Rarely is there a day that Dr. Leak doesn’t bring enthusiasm to our department, and he consistently shares thought-provoking findings related to the field of psychology with both faculty and students alike,” said Dr. Corey Guenther.

When Leak was younger he did not particularly enjoy school. However, in high school, Leak took a U.S. History course that changed everything. At this point, Leak decided he wanted to be a teacher, “I thought wouldn’t it be nice to get paid to talk about something interesting.” He considered becoming a high school teacher but soon realized “I would be dealing with people like me so I decided on college instead.” Leak preferred psychology because he found it interesting and he excelled in it. Over thirty years after accepting a position at Creighton, Leak can still say, “There are funny moments every day in the psychology department. We work very hard but have time to play. I just enjoy coming to work every day.”

There is no doubt that the psychology department appreciates Dr. Leak’s personality and attitude. According to Dr. Dustin Stairs, “Dr. Leak is a kind, fun-loving man. He cares about his family and fellow faculty members as well as his students. Dr. Leak loves a good joke and never takes himself too seriously.” Outside of the classroom, Dr. Leak enjoys reading books that are not psychology textbooks but rather books aimed more towards the intelligent layperson. An anonymous source close to Dr. Leak stated, “He is a contradiction; he is extremely intelligent, and yet he considers movies like ‘Airplane,’ ‘Tommy Boy,’ and ‘Deuce Bigalow: Male Gigolo’ to be comedic classics worth watching several times.”

This upcoming fall semester, Dr. Leak may be taking on yet another responsibility as chair of the psychology department for Dr. Lee Budesheim. Dr. Leak was the chair in 2003 and is now the only candidate for the open chair position. In order to be eligible, a professor must have tenure and be willing to take on the additional workload. Some of the tasks of the chairperson include making the class schedule, obtaining faculty input, managing the budget, and dealing with problems within the department. Leak’s favorite aspect of being chair was solving unanticipated problems. “I like having unexpected problems to solve and dealing with challenges that come up.”

Dr. Budesheim is going to miss the occasions he had as chair to represent the department. “I love when I have the opportunity to advocate on behalf of the department but I can do a lot of that as a colleague as well.” He is looking forward to next semester with fewer meetings and the extra time he can apply towards research. Budesheim’s advice for the next chair is to be approachable to students and every member of the department. “Honestly we have such a good department we’re going to be fine no matter who takes over as chair. It’s such a talented and healthy department.”

Dr. Leak is an essential part of the psychology department and a great candidate for the new chair position. Not only does he excel at his job, but he loves it too. Dr. Leak said it best, “What’s neat about being a teacher is that you get rewarded by continuing to learn; you are constantly gaining more knowledge and it’s fun.”

Music Match!
Match the professor to their favorite song!

1. Beauty and the Beast - Stevie Nicks
   A. Dr. Jill Brown
2. Pie Jesu - Andrew Lloyd Webber
   B. Dr. Corey Guenther
3. You are More - Tenth Avenue North
   C. Dr. Mathew Huss
4. Emaline - The Young Hasselhoffs
   D. Ms. Rachel Hayes
5. Wonderwall - Oasis
   E. Ms. Debra Schwiesow
6. Skinny Love - Bon Iver
   F. Mr. Gene Walker
7. Just Got To Be - The Black Keys
   G. Dr. Dustin Stairs
8. Love Will Tear Us Apart - Joy Division
   H. Dr. Maya Khanna
9. Hope – Nuclear Valdez
   I. Dr. Gary Leak
10. Rock N Roll - Eric Hutchinson
    J. Ms. Leah Georges
11. Lullaby – Billy Joel
    K. Dr. Isabelle Cherney
12. Layla - Eric Clapton
    L. Ms. Allison Harlow
13. Lady in Red – Christ DeBurgh
    M. Dr. Laura Finken
14. Come on Feel the Noise - Quiet Riot
    N. Dr. Joseph Allen
15. I Still Haven’t Found What I’m Looking For – U2
    O. Dr. Lee Budesheim
16. The River - Garth Brooks
    P. Dr. Amy Badura Brack
17. Closer to Fine - Indigo Girls
    Q. Dr. James Lupo
You may have walked by Hixson-Lied 337 and not even noticed it. The outside looks like a closet or a small storage room. But Hixson-Lied 337 is home to the ProjectWISE research lab. ProjectWISE is a nation-wide longitudinal study that looks at women’s life adjustment between the ages of 18 and 25. ProjectWISE works with a community sample and is NIH funded. The project coordinator for the Omaha site is Tara Ryan, a Creighton graduate. Ryan attended Creighton and earned her undergraduate degree in business but took many Psychology classes. She found her passion in psychology and after graduation become the coordinator for ProjectWISE. “People can benefit from time off and getting experience [before graduate school],” said Ryan. ProjectWISE also provides a great opportunity for undergraduate students to gain research experience. Twelve Creighton undergraduates are involved as research assistants. Ryan sees this research opportunity for undergraduate students as a great learning experience. “Research assistants get to work with a diverse study population and learn the nuances of adapting to new and sometimes challenging situations,” said Ryan. What is also beneficial about ProjectWISE is that students get to be a part of a project that could help further research in that field. “We will be able to say with more certainty or a better degree of accuracy how different life experiences that women have affect them later in life. The psychologists on the team hope to use the findings to develop interventions for women. Hopefully, these interventions can be applied on a large scale and benefit many women in the future.”