Message from the Chair

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair …

The above passage is from the opening paragraph of Charles Dickens’ 1859 novel entitled A Tale of Two Cities. It was originally intended to describe the plight of the peasantry at the hands of the aristocracy in the years leading up to the French Revolution, but some might argue it describes the struggle today that many feel in higher education. I agree with the sentiment that times are tough, and that we seem to be working against a very strong current at times. Indeed, budgets and services are decreasing; class sizes and tuition are increasing; and the moniker of the day from administrators is “do more with less.” But there is a silver lining, a ray of hope. As bad as things may seem, I believe this is also a time of great opportunity for a number of reasons.

First, the university’s mission is to improve the human condition; to advance knowledge through excellence in learning, discovery and engagement; and to serve as a diverse student-centered public metropolitan research university. As psychologists engaged in the scientific study of behavior, we are uniquely suited to fulfill the university’s mission. Furthermore, we are committed to extending this goal beyond the campus to all members of the community at large.

Second, we have a lot of interested young minds. Our undergraduate program is the largest on campus with well over 500 majors and growing. The number of applications to our doctoral program has also seen a dramatic increase, and we graduate more PhDs at UT each year than any other program. In fact, we took 12 new doctoral students this year (our largest class ever) and 2 of those students were awarded prestigious university fellowships.

Finally, in today’s world, we have a number of important issues to address for which psychology can offer effective and practical solutions. In fact, even the government ascribes to this viewpoint; grant funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Institutes of Health (NIH) to the social and behavioral sciences is at an all-time high. Our newsletter is designed to give you a flavor of what is going on in our field, in general, and our department, in particular. In this issue, for example, you will hear about the work of Dr. Tiamiyu who runs the award-winning Star Mentee Program and, as a researcher, explores the roles of hope, optimism, and family support on unemployment and weight and eating-related issues. You will also learn the definition of STEM – a term tossed about by politicians and educators – and numeracy – an individual difference factor that relates to educational performance and real-world understanding of things such as health information. I think you will really enjoy it. Times are indeed tough, but if we lose hope, we lose everything. There are exciting things happening in our department, and we are ecstatic to share them with you. Read on, and let us know what you think.

Dr. J. D. Jasper

Strengthening Our Science: Enhancing the Status of Psychology as a STEM Discipline

By Kamala London, Ph.D.

Last November, I attended a three-day American Psychological Association (APA) Science Leadership Conference as the Division 37 representative. The goal of the conference was to generate concrete plans regarding how to promote psychology as a STEM (science-technology-engineering-mathematics) discipline.

As we all know, federal research dollars are difficult to accrue. The conference attendees emphasized that as psychologists, we need to work together to ensure that future research dollars get allotted to psychological research. With the increased emphasis on funding STEM disciplines, the very future of psychology is going to depend on our unified front in presenting our science to the public and to governmental officials so that we can be sure research money will be available for basic and applied psychological research and training.

To learn more about the subject and how you can advocate, visit the task force report at apa.org/science/about/psa/2011/03/advance-psychology.aspx
Majors Making an Impact

By Kathy McGuire and Nicole Lytle, Graduate Students

One of the things that our undergraduate program provides is the opportunity for students to get involved in hands-on research. This past summer, the developmental psychology lab conducted a study in the Toledo area with 4- to 8-year-old children. The project was performed in collaboration with Dr. Steve Ceci at Cornell University. The goals of this study were to collect data regarding children’s ability to remember their own participation in an event versus another child’s participation in that same event.

Specifically, children played a couple of well-known games (e.g., Eye Spy) and were later asked to remember what their own contributions to the game were versus the contributions of their partner. Findings of the study have forensic applications as children who are alleged victims of crimes are often asked to remember whether something happened to them or to someone close to them. Children must be able to distinguish between the two in order to provide an accurate account to forensic investigators.

Recruiting children to participate in psychological research studies is extremely difficult, but our research assistants performed exceptionally well — recruiting and testing over 100 kids in two months, a lab record!! We want to give special recognition to our research assistants Katherine Rasmussen, Lela Day, John Arvanitis, Andrea Barlage, Aline Waxemberg, and Heath Ridenbaugh. This project accomplished not only the developmental lab’s research goals but it also benefited our research assistants who were able to see firsthand the many stages of the research process.

John Arvanitis, who graduated in August, commented, “I really enjoyed the experience that I had in the developmental psychology lab practicum. One of the main reasons why I found the experience so rewarding was the fact that the data gained throughout the experiment has the opportunity to positively impact the justice system, specifically involving children and the role they play.”

Aline Waxemberg, currently a junior in the psychology program at UT, commented, “My experience in the Summer Research Practicum was extremely rewarding. I was able to get hands-on experience with a great group of individuals and learn firsthand how to gather data. I was able to see and be a small part of all the hard work that goes into performing an experiment and it definitely enriched my experience at The University of Toledo.”

Best of all, the community children had a great time and were happy to be involved with The University of Toledo. While testing and recruiting off campus is challenging, being able to work directly with local children and families is a lot of fun. Our research would not be possible without community support. Thank you again to all who helped out.

Mind Games: What is Numeracy?

By: Ryan Corser and Chandrima Bhattacharya, Graduate Students

Are you math literate?
Answer the following questions and then read on to learn more about numeracy.

1. Dan borrows $800 from his parents. Dan’s parents charge him 10% interest that adds up monthly. If Dan does not pay his parents back for two months, how much will he owe them then?

2. If the chance of getting a disease were two out of 40, this would be the same as having a ___% chance of getting this disease?

3. A car dealership is having a lottery in which the chance of winning a new car is 1%. How many people would win a new car if 1,000 people each buy a single ticket from the dealership?

The items you just answered are sample problems that assess statistical and mathematical reasoning (also known as numeracy). To see how you did, check the answers at the end of this article.

Unfortunately, most Americans possess only a basic understanding of mathematical concepts, scoring below average on several numeracy measures compared to other industrialized countries (Reyna, Nelson, Han, & Dieckmann, 2009). These results may not surprise you given the frequent news coverage concerning American’s mediocre performance on standardized math tests. What may come as a surprise to you is how numeracy can influence your everyday decision-making.

For example, in the area of medical decision-making, studies have shown more numerate individuals are more accurate at reading numeric information from graphs depicting the risk and benefits of different treatments and extracting the gist of the information presented (Hawley, Zikmund-Fisher, Ubel, Jancovic, Lucas, & Fagerlin, 2009), which can lead to better health outcomes.

Recently, Dr. Jasper and his students from the Decision Research Lab at UT found that numeracy also impacts risk taking in a gambling task, with less numerate individuals making more risky choices.


Lab Gab: The Stress & Anxiety Lab

Run by the husband and wife team of Drs. Laura Seligman and Joseph Hovey, the lab oversees the work currently done through the Center for the Study of Anxiety Disorders and Depression (CSADD) and the Program for the Study of Immigration and Mental Health (PSIMH). Past topics of study include assessment, mechanisms and treatment of stress and anxiety disorders in children and adults; the comorbidity of anxiety disorders and depression; and the assessment and prevention of anxiety, depression, suicide risk and HIV-AIDS risk in underserved populations.

Drs. Seligman and Hovey recruit and work with graduate students who are primarily interested in academic careers. Dr. Hovey says, “Our former students have obtained post-doctoral and tenure-track positions at places such as Yale University School of Medicine, University of Rochester Medical Center, the Menninger Clinic, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Longwood University and the American University in Cairo. And our current group of students is stellar.” They currently have seven graduate students, including three who are recipients of UT’s prestigious University Fellowship.

So, what is it like working in the Stress & Anxiety Lab? Is it – pardon the pun – stressful? “Definitely” says Jessica Gahr, a 2nd year graduate student, “but it’s rewarding. Ultimately, I’m doing what I like doing, but you have to put in the work. I find it challenging, but in a good way. I find every day that my current knowledge boundary is being pushed, but that makes me a better researcher and clinician.” Jessica is extensively involved in the ongoing work of the Stress & Anxiety Lab. She reports that she “oversees some projects and helps on others,” some of which have applied value. For example, she is currently collecting data on what therapies clinicians are using and assessing how willing they would be to get information on empirically supported therapies (ESTs).

One of the more exciting developments in the lab is the proposal of the $6 million CASPHR, or the Center for Anxiety, Stress and the Promotion of Health and Resilience. The brainchild of Drs. Seligman and Hovey and others in the department including Dr. Andrew Geers – a social psychologist by training, this proposed UT Center of Excellence would provide a structure to unite researchers, educators, clinicians and community members to translate scientific discoveries into improved health outcomes. In fact, Dr. Hovey exclaims, “It fills a void!” While there are other Centers of Excellence, “There is nothing like this in Northwest Ohio.” And the beauty, according to Dr. Hovey, is that, if funded, “it will help the department by consolidating resources and interests, it will build bridges and serve as a mechanism to collaborate across campus, and most important, it will provide a presence in our community, allowing us to apply our findings to the real world.” They should find out if their proposal gets funded next year. Let us keep our fingers crossed, but in the meantime, let us not get anxious.

Community Minded

The Star Mentee Program

Since fall 2002, Dr. Mojisola Tiamiyu and the students taking her externship in psychology course have been positively influencing the lives of elementary school students Toledo through the Star Mentee Program.

The program, now located at St. Pius X School, involves an average of 20 undergraduate students spending at least 48 hours a semester providing academic mentoring and tutoring in all subjects to the elementary students.

The mentors undergo extensive orientation and receive supervision from the elementary school teachers. Additionally, the student mentors keep journals, identify empirical literature on mentoring and are encouraged to apply knowledge gained from such readings to their work with their student mentees. As a final component, the students write a structured reflection paper based on their readings and mentoring experiences.

In May 2003, Partners in Education in Toledo recognized the Star Mentee Program as a 2002-2003 BEST Partner Award nominee. Additionally, outcomes studies suggest that University participants increase in hope after participation in the program and are more likely to participate in community volunteerism, particularly with a diverse population. The program continues to draw University students through positive word-of-mouth and has a nearly perfect attendance rate among mentors.

Dr. Tiamiyu and the staff at St. Pius X plan on celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Star Mentee Program in fall 2012.

For more information about this program, please contact Dr. Tiamiyu at mojisola.tiamiyu@utoledo.edu

Upcoming Speakers

If you would like more information on attending these free, public events, please e-mail psyconnect@utoledo.edu or call the department at 419.530.2717.

Thursday, Nov. 17, 4 p.m. in Memorial Field House Room 1910
Amy Summerville, Miami University
Expertise: Counterfactuals and Regret

Thursday, Dec. 8, 4 p.m. in Memorial Field House Room 1910
Todd Kashdan, George Mason University
Expertise: Positive Psychology and Resilience
Ask a Psychologist
By Brittany Tenbarge, Graduate Student

What are some tips for coping with stress?
The American Psychological Association offers the following tips on how to manage your stress:

• Understand how you stress. Everyone experiences stress differently. How do you know when you are stressed? How are your thoughts or behaviors different from times when you do not feel stressed?

• Identify your sources of stress. What events or situations trigger stressful feelings? Are they related to your children, family, health, financial decisions, work, relationships or something else?

• Learn your own stress signals. People experience stress in different ways. You may have a hard time concentrating or making decisions, feel angry, irritable or out of control, or experience headaches, muscle tension or a lack of energy. Gauge your stress signals.

• Recognize how you deal with stress. Determine if you are using unhealthy behaviors (such as smoking, drinking alcohol and over/under eating) to cope. Is this a routine behavior, or is it specific to certain events or situations? Do you make unhealthy choices as a result of feeling rushed and overwhelmed?

• Find healthy ways to manage stress. Consider healthy, stress-reducing activities such as meditation, exercising or talking things out with friends or family. Keep in mind that unhealthy behaviors develop over time and can be difficult to change. Do not take on too much at once. Focus on changing only one behavior at a time.

• Take care of yourself. Eat right, get enough sleep, drink plenty of water and engage in regular physical activity. Ensure you have a healthy mind and body through activities like yoga, taking a short walk, going to the gym or playing sports that will enhance both your physical and mental health. Take regular vacations or other breaks from work. No matter how hectic life gets, make time for yourself – even if it is just simple things like reading a good book or listening to your favorite music.

• Reach out for support. Accepting help from supportive friends and family can improve your ability to manage stress. If you continue to feel overwhelmed by stress, you may want to talk to a psychologist, who can help you better manage stress and change unhealthy behaviors.

Information contained in this tip sheet should not be used as a substitute for professional health and mental health care or consultation. Individuals who believe they may need or benefit from care should consult a psychologist or other licensed health/mental health professional.

This is a modified version of a document entitled “Stress Tip Sheet” available at www.apa.org/news/releases/2007/10/stress-tips.aspx

Profiles

Meet Dr. Mojisola F. Tiamiyu. Dr. Tiamiyu, an associate professor in clinical psychology, joined the university in August 1997. She was born in Nigeria some fifty something years ago, where she obtained her bachelor’s degree in psychology (second class upper division) and her master’s degree in organizational psychology. After teaching at a university for a few years, she moved to Canada where she obtained her Ph.D. in community psychology from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto in 1993. Shortly before joining the University of Toledo, Dr. Tiamiyu served as the research coordinator for a community-based social justice agency, the Social Planning Council of Peel, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada.

In describing her teaching philosophy, Dr. Tiamiyu says that she is reminded of the British actor, Laurence Olivier’s quote: “Always do your best, you can’t do more and you mustn’t do less.” This phrase she says guides her as she juggles her roles as a teacher, advisor, and mentor. Dr. Tiamiyu is passionate about teaching and guiding the new generation of teachers. She has been nominated several times for the Outstanding Teacher Award, and the former College of Arts and Sciences appointed her a Master Teacher (2006-2010). She served as the special assistant to the Dean for Student Retention and Career Development (College of Arts & Sciences) from January 2008 to May 2009.

Dr. Tiamiyu’s research addresses physical, mental, and behavioral health issues at both the micro- and macro-levels using community psychology, positive psychology, and cross-cultural perspectives. She is also interested in the development, implementation, and evaluation of community-based programs and empowerment interventions. For over 20 years, Dr. Tiamiyu has set an example helping various community-based research programs and interventions, therein, inspiring students to get involved. Her first line of research analyzed a community-based intervention to empower low-income Nigerian women and their families. She continues to maintain an interest in the interfaces of race, gender, and class issues. Later her research focused on university-community collaborations, in particular, how universities and their surrounding community agencies develop more productive relationships. To this end, she carried out needs assessments in human service agencies and experimented with different models for universities for working more effectively with their local communities in ventures like research consultation and service learning. She has been involved in writing grants with colleagues in different departments and colleges as well as with community partners, and several have been funded.

Most recently, Dr. Tiamiyu has been working on unemployment-related issues, including coping with job loss and the recession that often involve psychosocial factors such as family support, hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy associated with coping and the positive outcomes of unemployment, such as personal growth.

To Dr. Tiamiyu, the importance of service learning and other modes of experiential learning and community outreach opportunities for students cannot be overemphasized. Thus, in addition to the above endeavors, she developed a service-learning and community externship course, known as the Star Mentee Program in the fall of 2002, with a mini-grant from the Corporation for National Service, Learn and Serve America: Higher Education. The program involves every semester having about 20 UT students serve as tutors and academic mentors.
PsyConnec considers herself to be very student-centered as to achieving UT’s mission. Dr. Tiamiyu and commitment to improving the lived of the local community; leadership skills, population and resources; understanding States; knowledge of UT’s diverse student in Nigeria, Canada, and the United reaccreditation scheduled for February. Central Association of Colleges [HLC/NCA] 2012 Higher Learning Commission/North Engagement and Service criterion for the UT being the self-study team leader for the on several committees at the departmental, (IUC) program to prepare campus leaders fellowship – an Inter-University Council Dr. Tiamiyu was a recipient of the Ohio Outreach and Engagement Excellence Award in 2003, and the success of the program to students at elementary schools here in Toledo. The program was nominated for the Partners in Education’s Best Partners award in 2003, and the success of the program earned Dr. Tiamiyu the UT Edith Rathbun Outreach and Engagement Excellence Award in 2008. Dr. Tiamiyu was a recipient of the Ohio Academic Leadership Academy (OALA) fellowship – an Inter-University Council (IUC) program to prepare campus leaders for Ohio’s colleges and universities, in the 2007/2008 academic year. Dr. Tiamiyu serves on several committees at the departmental, college and university levels, including being the self-study team leader for the Engagement and Service criterion for the UT 2012 Higher Learning Commission/North Central Association of Colleges [HLC/NCA] reaccreditation scheduled for February. Dr. Tiamiyu’s experience in higher education in Nigeria, Canada, and the United States; knowledge of UT’s diverse student population and resources; understanding of the local community; leadership skills, and commitment to improving the lived experiences of students have contributed to achieving UT’s mission. Dr. Tiamiyu considers herself to be very student-centered as a teacher, advisor, mentor, and researcher. She was the faculty co-advisor for two years and the faculty advisor for seven years to Psi Chi, the international honor society in psychology. Interestingly enough, Dr. Tiamiyu is also a traditional African Chief. Her title is Chief Eye Akewesulu, which means “a woman who uses education to develop society.” This chieftaincy was bestowed on her by His Royal Highness, The Onimesi of Iseesi-Ekiti. Iseesi-Ekiti is a city in the southwestern part of Nigeria. As a Chief, Dr. Tiamiyu, and her husband, Muibi G. Tiamiyu who is also a chief are leaders engaged in philanthropic activities, such as endowment of scholarships for students at different educational levels, donation of books to schools and libraries, and provision of clothing, electricity and water to the economically disadvantaged. Dr. Tiamiyu and her husband are blessed with three children: a son, Olatunde A. Tiamiyu who graduated from UT with a bachelor’s degree in computer science and engineering three years ago; a daughter, Iyabode L. Tiamiyu, who graduated this last May from UT’s honors program with a bachelor’s degree in biology; and another son, Oladeji M. Tiamiyu, who is a sophomore majoring in pre-law/political science and French.

Dr. Tiamiyu explains she is able to juggle all her multiple responsibilities “because of God, my name ‘Mojisola,’ and family support. God makes the impossible possible; my life is guided by the meaning of my name, Mojisola. I was born into an honorable family, and so I do things to bring honor and respect to my family, and I receive a lot of support from my immediate/nuclear and extended family members.” For example, Dr. Tiamiyu’s father is a retired professor of geography and a former Nigerian university vice chancellor (which is the same as the president of an American university). She fondly remembers spending many hours of her school holidays during her elementary and high school days in her father’s office or the university bookstore where her mother was the bookstore manager. Growing up in such an educationally enriching environment, she engaged in reading a wide variety of books that widened her horizon. In addition, her parents’ great influence on others showed her how to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Being the first-born with five other siblings is also a great motivator. Dr. Tiamiyu says “I was born to do all I do.” Surely, Dr. Tiamiyu’s reality is truly unique and multidimensional, and she hopes that this reality will serve her well as the first editor of PsyConnect.
Psych Talk: News about our Students, Faculty and Alumni

- Jackie Pidruzny, a current graduate student, was awarded a 2011 Robert N. Whiteford Memorial Scholarship from the College of Graduate Studies for her dissertation research. Her research examines the effects of violent screen media on the behavior of children with autism spectrum disorders.

- Heather Pelletier, a current graduate student, was awarded the Judy Sydenstricker Scholarship to Ohio Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) and was honored at the Ohio CASA Conference in September.

- A research article by Drs. Henry and Rickye Heffner was recently acknowledged as having the third most downloads in 2010 from the Journal of the American Association for Laboratory Animal Science. Their 2007 article entitled “Hearing Ranges of Laboratory Animals” was downloaded 165 times during last year alone! The article provides a comprehensive guide to investigators and animal managers on hearing abilities, and is based on the Heffners’ 40+ years of research into the evolution of hearing.

- Brad Okdie recently earned his Ph.D. in social psychology from the University of Alabama, and landed a highly coveted tenure-track faculty position in the Department of Psychology at the Ohio State University-Newark. Dr. Okdie was an undergraduate at UT who graduated in 2003. Dr. Okdie’s research is on the forefront of those studying social interactions over the internet.

- Travis Conradt, a current graduate student, was awarded an American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) Student Travel Award for his poster presentation entitled “Source Monitoring of Suggested Event Details in Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder” presented at the 4th International Congress on Psychology and Law in Miami, Florida last March.

- Dr. Gregory J. Meyer, Professor of Psychology, received the 2011 Award for Distinguished Contributions to Assessment Psychology. Dr. Meyer was announced as the recipient of this prestigious award at the recent American Psychological Association convention in Washington, DC. Congratulations, Dr. Meyer!

- Kathleen Curtiss, a former graduate student in clinical child psychology, recently began a Postdoctoral Associate position at Duke University Medical Center in the Department of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences with a secondary appointment in the Department of Pediatrics, Division of Medical Genetics. Her primary duties will be working on an NIH funded research project administering a battery of neuropsychological and psychiatric tests to children with chromosome 22q11.2 deletion syndrome. We wish Kathleen the best as she embarks on this exciting phase of her academic career.

- Congratulations to Ms. Michelle Roley and Mr. Gregory Erickson, two new students in the department’s doctoral program, who have been named as University Fellowship recipients. The University Fellowship is the highest honor awarded by the University of Toledo to students enrolled in graduate programs university-wide. This year only three students received this honor.

- Dr. Jon Elhai, Associate Professor of Psychology, recently published two new papers that challenge existing conceptualizations of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In a 2011 paper in the Journal of Anxiety Disorders (co-authored with Ms. Tracey Biehn, one of his graduate students), Elhai’s lab discovered a novel, underlying construct of empirically-related PTSD symptoms, involving a mix of dysphoria and hyperarousal symptoms. And in a 2011 paper in the Journal of Affective Disorders (co-authored with Ms. Ateka Contractor, another graduate student), Elhai’s lab discovered unique relations between PTSD and specific components of depression.

- Finally, Dr. Harvard Armus, professor emeritus, was recently featured in the campus paper – the UT Independent Collegian. Entitled “University of Toledo Psychology Professor says ‘It’s a no brainer,'” the article describes the work Dr. Armus and his graduate students are doing on learning in single-cell organisms. Congratulations, Dr. Armus! Keep up the good work.

Contact Us
Mojisola F. Tiamiyu (editor), Nicole Lytle and Melissa Jensen (editorial assistants); Travis Conradt, Ryan Corser and Brittany Tenbarge (contributors)

To send us news for inclusion in the spring newsletter, please write, e-mail (psyconnect@utoledo.edu), or fax 419.530.8479. Tell us what you are doing; feel free to include professional information and whatever you think would be of interest to fellow alums. You may also send high-resolution photos, preferably digital (at least 900 KB file size), for possible use.

Name_______________________________________________

UT Graduation Year/Degree (If applicable): ________________________________

Address: _____________________________________________________________

E-mail: ______________________________________________________________

Would you prefer that we e-mail you the next issue of the newsletter? _______Yes _______ No

News from you: __________________________________________________________

Send to: PsyConnect Newsletter
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Support the Department of Psychology

Yes! I would like to join other alumni and friends in supporting the research, teaching and community-outreach mission of the Department of Psychology by making a GIFT/PLEDGE in the amount of:

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