

PsychologyNews

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BINGHAMTON
UNIVERSITY
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Harpur College
of Arts and Sciences





Peter Gerhardstein

Greetings from the Psychology Department!

This is the inaugural newsletter for the department as I start a new term as chair. I also note that Professor Maria-Teresa Romero has taken over as the director of undergraduate studies for psychology.

We intend to produce a newsletter each semester to provide updates on activities of members of our departmental community at the graduate and undergraduate levels. There are so many things to mention that we will not get to all of them in this first edition. Instead, we will have a running feature in future issues that describes new developments in the department.

Certainly a major development is the opening of Science 5, a new research facility for behavioral neuroscience, which you can read about in this edition. We will next describe the process of renovating the existing psychology building (Science 4), which will begin this summer. We are also

in the process of hiring new faculty, and we welcome Professor Jennifer Gillis and Professor Rich Mattson to the department as they join the clinical sciences faculty this spring. We will feature descriptions of each of their research programs in future issues of the newsletter. New faculty will be particularly welcome as Harpur College currently projects significant growth in the next few years, with the accompanying expectation that the Psychology Department will also grow. We will also use the newsletter to announce and honor exceptional performance in our undergraduate, graduate and alumni groups.

We want your help with this effort! Please send in suggestions for feature stories on these or any topics that you feel may be of interest to the departmental community.

Peter Gerhardstein
Chair, Associate Professor of Psychology

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Science 5 opens



Science 4 upgrade to benefit department

By Meghan Perri

With the Science 5 building completed, Binghamton University faculty are preparing for the next phase of construction. Renovations to the east side of Science 4 will begin in the summer, giving the Psychology Department an upgrade.

“The Psychology Department has grown a lot since this building was built, especially in the number of faculty and students,” says Celia Klin, associate professor of psychology. “The University recognized our need for more space.”

By summer, faculty from the east side of the building will be moved to the west side or into a temporary space in another building. Currently, the University is renovating spaces on the west side for faculty to move into.

“The renovation process is going to be fairly painful because we are going to be cramped, but the new design is beautiful,” Klin says. “The outside walls of the building will stay up, but on the inside it is as close to new construction as can be.”

Plans for the new building include larger conference rooms for classes and meetings.

The main entrance, facing the parking lot near the Anderson Center, will be clearly marked and people visiting Science 5 can stop at the front desk there for help and directions.

New lab layouts will include high-tech upgrades, according to Klin.

“The faculty got to sit down with architects and give extensive input as to what we wanted our labs to look like. It was really great. They are going to be general enough to work for people in the future, but we still got a lot of input.”

The renovated Science 4 will take after

Science 5 in its emphasis on shared space. Labs will have shared meeting rooms where researchers can talk about their work, collaborate and share ideas.

“Science works in interaction and collaboration, and the new spaces will allow this,” Klin says. “When researchers are together in a room, it works well educationally. People are much more likely to teach each other and contribute to one another’s work. We do better work if we don’t do it in a vacuum.”

Renovations for the east side of Science 4 are slated for completion in fall 2015.

All labs have officially moved

into the new Science 5, a state-of-the-art facility that integrates molecular biochemical aspects of the behavioral neuroscience field with the behavioral techniques necessary for the advancement of modern neuroscience research. The new facility provides a highly functional space that will likely impress alumni who have previously worked in Science 4. The new format of shared spaces has increased collaborative efforts and enables more interaction between both faculty and students and between students from different labs. The addition of Science 5 to the Binghamton University campus has created an explosion of opportunities for students: approximately 70 undergraduates worked in Science 5 research labs during the fall 2012 semester alone.



A LOVE OF

LEARNING

By Meghan Perri

Sarah Laszlo researches reading development in children

Assistant Professor of Psychology Sarah Laszlo loves yoga and considers herself a “serious cook,” but for her, nothing beats spending time in the lab.

“My favorite part is the moment when you finish the experiment and get to find out the result, something no one knows,” Laszlo says. “You work so hard to get to the result, and finding out is the best.”

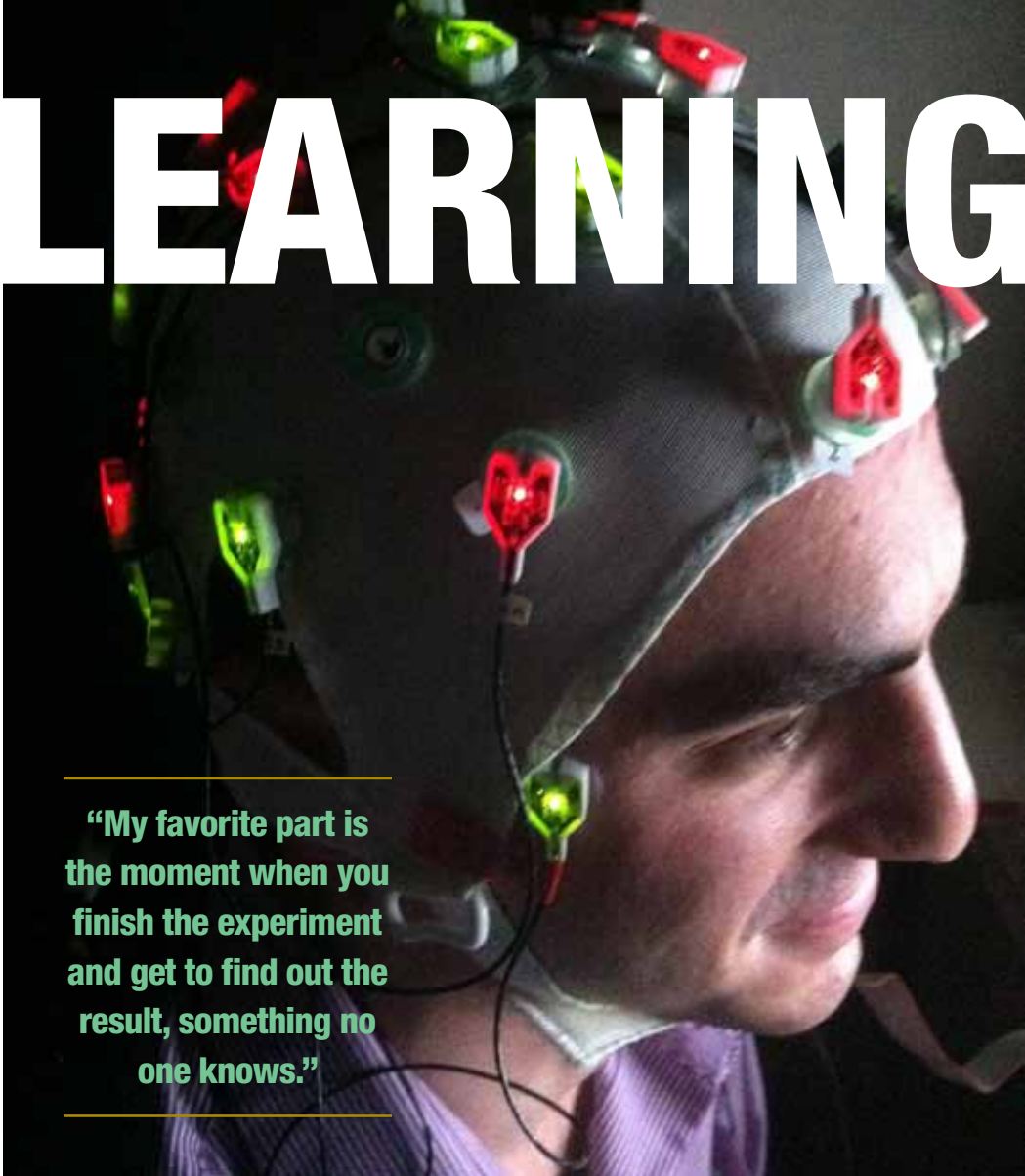
Laszlo was born and raised in Montana. She studied cognitive science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as an undergraduate and earned her master’s degree and PhD in psychology from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She completed a two-year fellowship at Carnegie Melon University before coming to work at Binghamton University.

Now in her third semester at Binghamton, Laszlo has only good things to say about her first faculty job.

“I feel so lucky to be a junior faculty member in this department,” Laszlo says. “Everyone is super supportive, and I’ve been able to do everything I’ve wanted to do.”

Laszlo is the director of the Brain and Machine Laboratory, where she is researching reading development in children. She and her team non-invasively record children’s brains as they read, with the intention of better understanding dyslexia and the factors behind it.

“There are a large proportion of kids in the United States who are dyslexic, and all this means is that they have trouble reading,” Laszlo explains. “Each dyslexic kid is different. By learning about how each kid is different, we can hopefully help individuals with specific types of dyslexia.”



“My favorite part is the moment when you finish the experiment and get to find out the result, something no one knows.”

To find out why some children have trouble reading, Laszlo and her team are looking into different factors, including eyesight and the age at which a child starts learning to read. They plan to continue the study for five to 10 years and follow the children as they go through school.

Laszlo started working with children when she came to Binghamton and says she plans to continue working with them for a long time.

“Working with kids is new for me, and I really love it,” she says. “I love having kids

in the lab. They are so joyous when they come in and get so excited about the idea of us listening to their brains.”

Laszlo also works with students, teaching two undergraduate courses, Models of Cognitive Function and Perception Lab, and one graduate-level course, Introduction to Computational Psychology and Matlab. She says she hopes to become a full professor and one day have a big lab with many student researchers. For now, though, she is happy to be working at a university where she can learn every day.

“As a kid, I loved school and I never stopped. It never died for me,” she says. “To be permanently in school is really great for me. I can’t imagine doing anything else.”

Laszlo lives in Binghamton with her Shih Tzu, Mr. Monk.

Sarah Laszlo directs the Psychology Department’s Brain and Machine Laboratory.



Doctoral student's work focuses on adolescent depression

Co-rumination,” a term coined by Amanda Rose, an associate professor of psychology at the University of Missouri-Columbia, describes the process by which friends focus on sharing thoughts and self-perceptions with each other to the exclusion of other activities, culminating in what has been described as a “contagious effect” of pessimistic thinking among friends or social groups.

Lindsey Stone, a doctoral student in clinical psychology whose research focuses on adolescent depression, explains that scientific evidence has confirmed that, “starting in adolescence, girls are at a much higher risk for developing depression than boys.”

According to Stone, this trend “is a bit of a paradox to researchers who study peer relationships because research shows that the friendships girls develop are much more supportive and intimate [as] compared to the friendships boys develop.”

The traditional view is that friendships protect or help an individual deal with emotional distress, but Stone’s research indicates that co-rumination among friends actually increases the risk for depression among adolescents. Her work supports the evidence that adolescent girls are more likely to co-ruminate (continually discuss and re-evaluate their problems and emotional reactions) whereas boys’ friendships are more activity-centered.

“Girls,” Stone says, “aren’t venting about problems, sympathizing with each other, and then moving onto another activity. They’re fixating on the problem, and to the extent that they become stuck in this pattern it becomes a poor coping strategy.”

Stone’s research expands the current work on friendship activity patterns by studying the impact of adolescent friendships on multiple levels (from the intimate friendship to broader social systems) through what she terms “social network analysis.”

“We just don’t have a [research-confirmed] handle on how peer contagion happens,” Stone

says. “Most therapy focuses on whether or not an individual has friendships. This research suggests that therapy needs to focus on the actual dynamics of how friends’ activities and support strategies impact risk, and more importantly how they can be modified to become more helpful and adaptive.”

So far, Stone’s research has confirmed that how we seek support from friends does matter and teens who seek support in maladaptive ways (co-rumination) are “more vulnerable to developing depression in the near future.” Her study of the impact of larger social networks and friendship groups may help answer which adolescents are more vulnerable to friends’ depression or coping strategies: those on the fringe of social groups or those at the core of a network.

An important element of Stone’s success has been the commitment of the faculty at Binghamton University.

“My advisor, Associate Professor Brandon Gibb, has had a vital role in helping me develop my ideas and line of research,” she said. “He is one of those rare mentors who is both super-invested in his students’ careers and treats us like colleagues responsible for defining our independent research interests.”

Stone also benefits from interdisciplinary collaboration with Associate Professor Pamela Mischen in the Public Administration Department. “Dr. Mischen ... has been instrumental in helping me develop competency in social network analysis. I cannot overemphasize how essential it is to have brilliant and supportive colleagues.”

Stone, who received a Graduate Student Award for Excellence in Research and an NIH NRSA predoctoral fellowship, is now completing her clinical internship in Rhode Island.

“Psychology as a science is still in its infancy,” Stone says. “There is just so much room for discovery. ... It’s thrilling to think that in some small way our research may contribute to understanding depression risk and improve future treatments for vulnerable teens.”

Lindsey Stone



“It’s thrilling to think that in some small way our research may contribute to understanding depression risk and improve future treatments for vulnerable teens.”

Senior balances psychology and ESCAPE

By Ethan Day

Lauren Benz works in Drugs and Development lab while directing student-run bus company

The office closed five minutes ago, but Lauren Benz is still carefully answering the questions of the day's last customer. It's apparent she didn't get the office with a view atop University Union West by leaving work early.

The timid high school student turned executive director of ESCAPE Bus Company has taken in much of what the University has to offer, and Benz recognizes the importance of her last four years.

"Binghamton was good for me," she says. "I was an extremely nervous, awkward person, and coming to Binghamton helped me develop independence. All of the learning experiences I've had here have been amazing, and I'm going to walk out of here stronger and more of a leader than I was in high school."

Benz joined ESCAPE in her freshman year after a friend insisted they both apply for jobs at the SA-chartered, nonprofit company. Her friend didn't get a job, but Benz did. She worked her way up from ticket sales to comptroller in her sophomore and junior years, and finally to her current position as executive director.

"It's like a full-time job," she says with a laugh.

Between schoolwork and ESCAPE, the Long Island native's day already appears full, but she somehow finds time for much more. In the Psychology Department, Benz studies integrative neuroscience, and her achievement in the classroom led to an uncommon opportunity for an undergraduate student.

Benz works as an assistant in the Drugs and Development laboratory directed by Distinguished Professor of Psychology Linda Spear. It is unusual for an undergraduate student to be selected for work in a lab staffed by graduate students.

The experience has been an important part of Benz's time at Binghamton.

"I've been exposed to so many different techniques, and I've been so hands-on working with the animals and helping the grad students run their experiments," she says. "It's more responsibility than people realize — even the simple tasks need to be carefully done."

Maggie Broadwater, a graduate student who also works in Spear's lab, calls Benz "one of our most impressive undergraduate assistants."

"This is her second year in our lab and she has always been reliable, hardworking, and most important, enthusiastic about learning," Broadwater says. "Lauren was a great help to me over the summer and during the fall semester with running my dissertation experiments. I was impressed with her ability to quickly pick up the somewhat tricky procedures that were required to run my experiment, and always felt confident that she would be careful and diligent while doing so."

Life at Binghamton for Benz has not been contained to just campus activities. For more than two years, she has worked with the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier (MHAST) as an at-risk youth mentor.

"I mentor a little girl, which has been such an eye-opener for me," she says. "I'm definitely seeing a different part of the world that I've never been directly exposed to before, and it's heartbreaking."

"All of the learning experiences I've had here have been amazing, and I'm going to walk out of here stronger and more of a leader than I was in high school."



Senior Lauren Benz works with Professor Linda Spear and graduate students in the Drugs and Development lab.

Benz came across the program when she was involved with the Student Volunteer Center at the University. She was initially shocked that just miles from campus, families are living in decrepit homes with broken floors and no doors. The process to become a mentor was extensive but well worth it, she says.

In addition to the bus company, school and mentoring, Benz is a member of the University's chapter of Alpha Phi Omega, a co-ed service fraternity built on volunteerism, and was a tutor for Binghamton's GEAR UP Program. For her personal recreation, she is an avid runner



and reader, and was once a member of Kickline Club.

With the ESCAPE office finally empty for the day, Benz sat next to the picture window and reflected on why she came to Binghamton, and how — after four years — it's suddenly time to move on.

“My dad loved Binghamton University, and even though he isn't an alum, he always thought it was a place with lots of

opportunities,” she says. “The more I researched Binghamton, the more I realized he was right — it had everything I was looking for, and coming here was the best decision I've ever made.”

Benz is applying to graduate schools now and intends to get a master's degree in public health. She wants the option of pursuing medical school, and sees a degree in public health as a good foundation. “Full” seems like an empty word to summarize Benz's time at Binghamton, but that may be the best way to describe it.

“I've made my way through this school,” she says. “I've taken advantage of most opportunities that I've come across.”



**Recent grad
receives
Gates
Cambridge
Scholarship**

Psychology student is first from Binghamton University to receive international honor

Natalia Chapovalova has become the first Binghamton University student to receive a prestigious Gates Cambridge Scholarship to study at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

Chapovalova, who graduated in December 2012 with a degree in psychology, is one of only 39 U.S. scholars chosen for the 2013-14 academic year. She also is one of two students from New York schools to earn the scholarship (the other recipient is from New York University). She will pursue a PhD in polar studies at Cambridge.

"It's an incredible honor," said Chapovalova, who was born in Russia, moved to the United States at age 5, and now lives in Pleasantville. "Binghamton University gave me the foundation to receive this scholarship."

Established by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in 2000 with a \$210 million endowment, the Gates Cambridge Scholarship is considered one of the world's most competitive awards. The scholarships allow graduate students from outside the United Kingdom to study at Cambridge and receive full funding for the duration of the degree. The program, which strives to build a network of future world leaders who will work to improve the lives of others, draws 800 U.S. applicants per year. That pool is then cut to 100 who go to Washington, D.C. for an interview. No more than 40 U.S. scholars and 50 other international scholars are selected each year.

Chapovalova's research will center on examining the healing practices of the Skolt Sami, indigenous people who live in Norway, Finland and Russia. She will conduct her research through the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge and

work with Piers Vitebsky, an internationally renowned anthropologist at the institute who has lived with an indigenous community in the Russian Arctic.

"The program at Cambridge is perfect for the kind of research I want to do," Chapovalova said. "Also, the Gates Cambridge looks for a broader impact and the projects I plan to do in the Sami communities would be best done within the Polar Research Institute where everybody is connected to the region."

Chapovalova's goal is to use western and traditional medicine to improve the healthcare system in Sami communities. She has already traveled to the region to conduct interviews for Sami cultural revitalization programs and is working with a Sami museum in Neiden, Norway, to display her video work. She plans to return in March to conduct more research before starting Cambridge classes in October.

"My interest in the Sami ties back to a fascination I've had since childhood with health and traditional healing," she said. "I ultimately decided on studying (the Sami) because it combined my Russian heritage with my interests in traditional healing among indigenous groups and how these practices change through interaction with other cultures."

Chapovalova stressed that she would not have been able to develop her interests without the opportunities provided by Binghamton University, such as working in the Marriage and Family Studies Laboratory led by Assistant Professor of Psychology Matthew Johnson.

"That introduced me to psychological research," she said. "I studied the

relationship between health and marital status. Looking at that from a cross-cultural perspective got me thinking about different cultural influences on health."

In June 2012, Chapovalova traveled to Mexico to study the relationship between alloparenting (non-parents looking after children) and geneological interrelatedness among the Seri tribe. The research, for which Chapovalova received funding from the Sodexo Internship Fund to help with the project, enabled her to observe traditional healing methods that furthered her desire to study health practices among indigenous groups.

In August 2012, Chapovalova became a Harpur Fellow and created an art-therapy program for disabled children in Belarus

who have suffered from the after-effects of the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear accident. She not only worked with the children, but also helped caregivers from the children's orphanages and institutions develop a long-term art-therapy program.

"There is a lot of opportunity at Binghamton. There are a lot of people to go to for advice and there are opportunities to do fantastic things."

Chapovalova was active on campus, working as editor-in-chief of the Journal of Undergraduate Anthropology, founding the Undergraduate Psychology Review, serving as vice president of the Student Psychological Association and as a tutor for the Educational Opportunities Program. She also worked in the community for the Mental Health Association of the Southern Tier as an interpreter for Russian patients.

"There is a lot of opportunity at Binghamton," Chapovalova said. "There are a lot of people to go to for advice and there are opportunities to do fantastic things."

Kurtz receives grant to examine ‘inert knowledge’

By Meghan Perri



Associate Professor of Psychology Kenneth J. Kurtz has received a three-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education to investigate a technique that may improve student learning.

“People’s knowledge is often inert,” says Kurtz, director of the Learning and Representation in Cognition Laboratory. “We understand a principle, but we don’t make the link when we encounter a new example that relates in an underlying way, but not in terms of its surface elements.

In this project, we are looking to find a solution to the problem of inert knowledge, one of the ‘Holy Grails’ of cognitive research.”

The award, “Enhancing Learning and Transfer of Science Principles via Category Construction,” provides about \$750,000 to fund Kurtz’s work testing the category construction technique with seventh-grade life sciences students in the Union-Endicott School District.

“The idea is to use this technique to help students master principles and represent the knowledge in a way that allows them to spontaneously retrieve it and transfer it when appropriate,” Kurtz says. “Over the past three years we have been working on this technique in a lab setting, and the goal now is to try it out in a classroom setting with curricular materials.”

The category construction technique involves presenting students with a set of six cases to evaluate. Three of the cases are correct examples of a target principle and

three are contrast cases, but the students do not know which are which. The students are tasked with sorting the correct examples from the wrong ones.

“This sort task encourages comparison between examples, which helps with promoting transfer of knowledge,” Kurtz says. “In addition, we hypothesize that it is important for the learner to think about the principle as a category, a way of making sense of the world in which the examples we experience are seen as instances of a category.”

After the sorting task, students are given a related test problem that can be solved

by transferring knowledge of the principle. So far in the lab, Kurtz and his team have observed promising results. Learners given the category construction training have shown some of the highest success rates Kurtz has seen for spontaneous transfer of knowledge.

The three-year grant will allow

Kurtz to take his research to the schools, where his team can try out different versions of the technique to find what works best in authentic classroom conditions.

“I’m excited about being able to come up with something that might change the playing field in terms of our scientific understanding of how people organize and access knowledge,” Kurtz says. “At the same time, actually helping teachers and students succeed in the classroom is something very valuable to contribute.”

“I’m excited about being able to come up with something that might change the playing field in terms of our scientific understanding of how people organize and access knowledge.”



2012 Memorial Awards

BURRIGHT

Richard G. Burright was a prominent professor of psychology at Binghamton University for 40 years. He received his bachelor's, master's and PhD degrees at the University of Illinois-Urbana. A veteran of service with the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956, he began his career at Harpur College in 1963 and remained there until his retirement. Along with his colleague Professor Peter Donovan, he researched neural, environmental, genetic, nutritive and life-span correlates of behavior related to the integration and use of sensory information in both brain-damaged and healthy organisms. Co-director of Binghamton University's Environmental Neuropsychology Laboratory, Burright has been described as a dedicated teacher, passionate scholar and even a mentor to current Binghamton psychology professors. He passed away on Nov. 29, 2003, at the age of 69. The Burright award is given to a graduating senior in psychology who demonstrates both academic merit as well as a compelling record of broad interests and activities in both the academy and the outside community.

2012 winner: Arielle Kahn, supervised by Joe Morrissey

KOVACS

Steven W. Kovacs was an influential undergraduate psychology student at Binghamton University. He worked as research assistant in both Professor Lisman's and Professor Klin's laboratories and as a tutor and research assistant in the Institute for Child Development. In addition to his obvious commitment to research and stellar grades, Kovacs also worked at the Boys and Girls Club and as a counselor during summers at Crestwood Country Day School, and he volunteered for a number of philanthropic causes, including the CHOW walk on campus and the Relay for Life. Despite his busy schedule, Kovacs was also a brother of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and a personal trainer at Fit Space. He was the 2009 winner of the department's Helen B. Daly Award and was accepted into the University of Tennessee's PhD program in school psychology. Kovacs died unexpectedly at the age of 22 on July 8, 2009. The Kovacs award, which his family created in his honor, is given to a graduating senior in psychology who displays a clear passion for research in psychological science and who plans to continue his or her education to obtain a PhD in psychology.

2012 winner: Crystal Austin, supervised by Matthew Johnson

DALY

Helen Bohmer Daly completed her undergraduate education at Harpur College in 1963 and her PhD at the University at Rochester in 1966. From 1968 until her death, Daly was engaged in internationally renowned research and teaching of learning and motivation at SUNY Oswego. She published widely cited papers in excellent journals. Her research consisted of three major areas: frustration theory, the DMOD mathematical theory, and the effects of environmental toxins on behavior. Besides her obvious passion and love for research, she was also a dedicated teacher, for which she received many awards. Daly's professional contributions are endless. She was known for her positive outlook on life and is remembered for her upbeat and friendly demeanor. She was 54 when she passed away on Nov. 23, 1995. The Daly award is given to a graduating senior in psychology who has shown excellence in the area of research through the completion of an honors project in psychology.

2012 winner: Madeliene Lempereur, supervised by Peter Gerhardtstein

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A NOTE ABOUT GIVING TO THE PROGRAM

Your support is invaluable! It allows us to support our students inside and outside of the classroom as well as providing opportunities for the further enrichment to their education. Contributions should be sent to the Binghamton University Foundation, PO Box 6005, Binghamton, NY, 13902-6005, and please note that it is for the Psychology Fund (account 10762).

Q&A with Joseph Ditre

Alumni Profile

Joseph Ditre '98 received his bachelor's degree in psychology from Binghamton University, where he earned the Helen B. Daly Memorial Undergraduate Research Award in 1998. He received his doctorate in psychology from the University of South Florida and now is an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at Syracuse University. He lives outside Syracuse with his wife, Emily, and three sons.

QUESTION: WHAT MADE YOU ORIGINALLY DECIDE TO COME TO BINGHAMTON? WHAT WERE YOUR IMPRESSIONS ON VISITING CAMPUS?

Answer: I knew of Binghamton as one of the elite public universities in the nation and in New York state. My impression on visiting campus was that the setting was absolutely beautiful with its rolling hills, trees, Nature Preserve, etc.

An interesting side note . . . I was initially rejected from Binghamton University and verbally petitioned the dean of admissions (I think that's who it was) to reconsider my application. I made the case that although my high school grades weren't that great, my subsequent experience serving in the U.S. Navy had prepared me to be a focused and committed college student. They ultimately took a flier on me and it seems to have worked out.

Q: DID YOU KNOW WHEN YOU CAME TO BINGHAMTON THAT YOU WERE GOING TO MAJOR IN PSYCHOLOGY?

A: I was always interested in psychology, and I knew that would be my primary major. I also majored in studio art.



Q: WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM THE PSYCHOLOGY CLASSES AND OTHER COURSES/ACTIVITIES YOU TOOK HERE THAT HAVE INFLUENCED YOUR CAREER?

A: One thing I learned shortly after I arrived at Binghamton was that I should get involved in research if I might ever want to attend graduate school. I also knew that Binghamton had an outstanding reputation as a public research institution. When I inquired as to what research opportunities might be available, one of the departmental advisors suggested that I touch base with a new (at the time) faculty member named Peter Gerhardstein. The research opportunities and mentoring offered by Dr. Gerhardstein were invaluable, and directly led to my interest in pursuing graduate studies with an emphasis on research.

Q: TELL US ABOUT YOUR CURRENT RESEARCH INTERESTS AND HOW AND/OR WHY YOU TOOK YOUR SKILLS TO A UNIVERSITY SETTING.

A: My general research interest is in health psychology with a focus on the intersection of addictive behaviors and comorbid medical disorders. We are currently executing a programmatic line of research that utilizes an interdisciplinary approach to examining reciprocal pathways between the initiation and maintenance of nicotine addiction (e.g., tobacco smoking) and the onset/exacerbation of chronic pain.

Although my work is a good fit for a medical setting, I sought a university-based faculty position because I really enjoy working with and mentoring undergraduate and graduate students. I benefitted from having outstanding mentors at Binghamton University and at the University of South Florida, and I appreciate having the opportunity to return the favor.

Q: WHAT ADVICE WHAT YOU GIVE PSYCHOLOGY STUDENTS AT BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY?

A: My advice to psychology students at Binghamton would be to get involved in a variety of research activities as soon as possible. The field of psychology is very broad, so I would recommend that students first try to work with faculty from a variety of backgrounds/perspectives (clinical, experimental, etc). Once students have a better idea of what they are interested in, I would recommend that they make a more focused commitment in one or two labs so that respective faculty members can better comment on their strengths when writing letters of support.