Psychology Department Faculty Welcomes Students to Major

This month the NAU Department of Psychology faculty will be hosting three events for students who are 1) interested in becoming a psychology major, or 2) are a major but want to know more about the program and its opportunities.

Students will benefit from learning more about their major, what skills the major affords, how this relates to current coursework and future goals. At these events students will learn:

- What is the psychology major?
- Department learning goals and our curriculum
- What can you do with a psychology major?
- The foundation courses: PSY 101, PSY 230, PSY 302w
- Breadth courses
- Depth courses
- Capstone experiences
- How to get involved
- Applying to graduate school
- Skills employers seek
- and more!

October 11, 1:45-3:15 pm, SBS Castro #110
October 15, 7:45-9:15 pm, SBS Castro #110
October 17, 5:45-7:15 pm, SBS West #200

We hope to see you there! This is a chance to meet many faculty and ask questions!

Faculty Research Featured in the Boston Globe

Why is cursive so hard to read? This was the question motivating a September 1st story in the Ideas section of the Boston Globe that featured the experimental work of new faculty member, Dr. Anthony Barnhart. Dr. Barnhart studies the cognitive processes underlying our incredible ability to read messy, handwritten words. Notably, Dr. Barnhart’s research has shown that when we read handwritten words, we gather important information from the overall shape of the word, rather than processing letters individually (as is thought to be the case with printed words). Furthermore, handwriting is often “noisy,” forcing the reader to rely on top-down processing (the use of prior knowledge and experience to make sense of messy word features) to a greater extent than is the case with printed words. The Boston Globe article can be accessed from the front page of Dr. Barnhart’s website at www.AnthonyBarnhart.com.

Teaching Psychology Around the World

Cambridge Scholars Publishing selected Teaching Psychology around the World: Volume 3 (2012), S. McCarthy, K. L. Dickson, J. Cranney, A. Trapp and V. Karandashev as September’s Book of the Month. Teaching Psychology around the World: Volume 3 “provides an up-to-date overview of international psychology teaching. It is a must-read for all instructors of psychology and university personnel engaged in building international programs, as well as psychologists and psychology students interested in the international aspects of the discipline. For more information, please go to this web address: http://www.c-s-p.org/Flyers/Teaching-Psychology-around-the-World--Volume-31-4438-3448-3.htm.

Interns-to-Scholars Project (I2S)

The purpose of the Interns-to-Scholars (I2S) program is to encourage undergraduate students early in their academic careers to participate in faculty research, scholarly, or creative projects by working as paid interns. Internships across all academic disciplines offer opportunities for students to engage in “learning by doing” outside of regular coursework.

- Taran DePaola recently began his second semester of a Social Neuroscience internship under the Interns-to-Scholars (I2S) program. Working with Dr. Chad
Woodruff, Mr. DePaolis is using electrophysiology (EEG) to measure activity from mirror neurons, a special type of brain cell that helps people empathize.

• Celena Leland is working with Dr. Steven Barger looking at the extent to which cardiovascular risk factors (cholesterol, blood pressure, diabetes, etc.) are lower among people with greater social relationship resources. It is well established that socially isolated people are at greater risk of dying as compared to those with more social connections. However, the specific pathway(s) that separate health risk among socially isolated (versus integrated) are less well understood.

This project examines social relationships and health-risk in a nationally representative US sample. Specifically, this study will determine if cardiovascular disease risk (e.g., blood pressure, cholesterol, diabetes, etc.) is lower among people with greater social relationship resources. Social relationships are assessed by relationship quantity (e.g., getting together with friends; belonging to clubs or organizations) and cardiovascular disease risk factors are measured in physical/labatory exams. For more information see the following web address: http://nau.edu/Undergraduate-Research/REU

Graduate Student Alum Publishes Thesis
Kristine Olson, an alum of NAU’s Psychology General Masters program, published her thesis in Human Resource Management. The study that was partially funded by the Coconino County Hispanic Advisory Council and the Vicki Green Thesis Scholarship highlighted the nature of ethnic groups and the need to focus on social justice and equity. The study that was partially funded by the Vicki Green Thesis Scholarship highlighted the nature of ethnic groups and the need to focus on social justice and equity.

REU Research Interns have a Compassionate & Adventurous Summer
In Summer 2012 eight undergraduate interns from across the country traveled to Flagstaff to participate in the 4th annual NAU Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) research internships in the Social Psychophysiology of Compassion. The NAU REU program is sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF), the NAU Vice President for Research, the NAU Provost, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the Department of Psychology. Each intern was apprenticed to a Psychology Department faculty member and spent 40-hours per week for 10 weeks from late May to early August in all stages of psychological research, including reviewing the relevant research literature and designing a research project, submitting for Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for the project when necessary, recruiting research participants, running participants through the study and collecting data, inputting data into statistical analysis programs, running the data analysis, interpreting the output, preparing a formal poster and oral presentation, and then, as the culmination of the summer experience, presenting their research project and outcomes at a formal public REU Conference in the campus High Country Conference Center on July 31. Additionally, interns are encouraged to submit their research to a regional or national conference for professional presentation. Each intern was paid a stipend for the summer, and received room and board, travel expenses, and a research budget funded by the REU program.

Faculty mentors for the summer 2012 REU program were Des. Birkett, Demir, Stevens, Weidler, and Woodruff. Our summer 2012 interns were COURTNEY ALLEN, University of Wisconsin, Joseph Bonner, Villanova University, Jonathan Gordils, University of Connecticut, JAZMINNE JOHNSON, Norfolk State University, Marissa Martinez, University of New Mexico, Haley Pruitt, Fort Lewis College, Brett Velez, Glendale Community College, and Dawn Whinnery, Arizona Western College. Intern research projects were each focused on the theme of compassion and were as follows:

• Compassion for Others: The Road to Happiness, Courtney Allen & Melikah Demir
• Effects of a Compassion Intervention, Joseph Bonner & Melissa Birkett
• Determination and Compassion: The Psychological Effects of Belief in Free Will, Jonathan Gordils & Chad Woodruff
• The Relationship between Self-Compassion and Exercise, Jazminne Johnson & Melissa Birkett
• Relational-Interdependent Self-Construal and Compassion, Marissa Martinez & Daniel Weidler
• Compassion for Others, Friendship Experiences, and Happiness Among Students and Non-Students, Haley Pruitt & Melikah Demir
• Self-Other Discrimination and Empathic Abilities, Brett Velez & Chad Woodruff
• Effects of Compassion Training on Electrodermal and Questionnaire Measures, Dawn Whinnery & Larry Stevens.

To date, this cohort of interns has presented a total of 19 professional paper and poster presentations of their research results, culminating in a Compassion Symposium of 6 oral paper presentations and 6 posters at the 121st Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in Honolulu, Hawaii on August 1, 2013. Who says research is all hard work collecting and analyzing data, when you get to spend a week on Waikiki Beach in Hawaii as a reward for all of that hard work!!

Of course, all work and no play makes for a grumpy intern, so our young scientists found time to have fun here in Flagstaff as well. Apart from their own private explorations about the Southwest, our interns spent fabulous weekends picnicking and playing volleyball at two local meet and greet events with other NAU REU Interns, hiking into the Grand Canyon of the Colorado River down to Cedar Ridge on the South Kaibab Trail, hiking the West Fork of Oak Creek Canyon, and camping at Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, Utah where we spent nearly 4 hours on a guided sacred sites cultural tour deep into the remote reaches of the Park, observed many ancient spiritual and mystical places, participated in a Navajo flute and drum healing ceremony, and enjoyed a dinner of hand-prepared Navajo tacos beneath the towering monuments. And this year, our interns also attended weekly workshops on understanding and developing compassion lead by Anthropology graduate student Lisa Dosokicol and were treated to a very special personal lecture and book signing on the holocaust by Doris and Ralph Martin of the NAU Martin-Springer Institute.

We feel certain that our REU interns spent an action-packed, compassionate, and intellectually stimulating summer actually doing research. And, we hope that each left their REU experience not only with an enduring love of psychological science, but a deep appreciation for the people, the cultures, and the grandeur and beauty of the Southwest.

The Psychology Department REU program has been funded by the NSF for another 3-year cycle and, following a hiatus during Summer 2013 when funding was delayed due to the federal budget sequestration, our REU will resume in Summer 2014. Interested students, faculty, alumni, and others are encouraged to review the program website at: http://www2.nau.edu/~psych/StevensREU/reu.html

2012 Summer REU Professional Presentations

October 2013 Newsletter


Hiking the Arizona Trail

Psychology department colleagues enjoyed a hike on Arizona Trail north from Aspen Corner on Snowbowl Road. The hike gave the group an opportunity to get to know each other, enjoy the beauty of Flagstaff, and, of course, “talk shop.”