

• THE PSYCHE

GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Hello, alumni and friends! This is my first *Psyche* as chair of the Psychology Department and I look forward to keeping you updated on the happenings in our department. You can also find up-to-date information on accomplishments at our departmental Web site (<http://dept.kent.edu/psychology>). Make sure to check out the Web site, particularly because the site received a new face this past year.



Dr. Mary Ann P. Stephens

As you may know, Kent State is experiencing a lot of positive change and is quickly moving forward. At the administrative level, Kent State recently added a new President (Dr. Lester Lefton) and a new Provost (Dr. Robert Frank). Both Drs. Lefton and Frank are psychologists. At the college level, Arts & Sciences gained a new dean, Dr. Timothy Moerland. We welcome these new administrators to Kent State University and look forward to working with them in the coming years. You can read more about each of them in this issue of *the Psyche*. At the departmental level, we added a new assistant professor, Dr. Jeff Ciesla. You can read more about Jeff's background.

We also had to say goodbye to several faculty who have played instrumental roles in the department in past decades. Richard Hirschman retired and Stevan Hobfoll assumed a position as chair of the Behavioral Sciences Department at Rush Medical College in Chicago, Ill. We wish both Richard and Stevan the best of luck in the next stage of their career and life. In this issue of *the Psyche*, you can also read an update on the work of one of our faculty members – Dr. Maria Zaragoza – and the work of one of our former students and advisee of Maria Zaragoza – Dr. Jen Ackil.

We hope you enjoy reading this *Psyche* and best wishes for 2009.

MEET THE FACULTY

We'd like to introduce a new member of our faculty, Dr. Jeff Ciesla, who is joining us from a postdoctoral position at Vanderbilt University. Jeff is a clinical psychologist whose research focuses on the influence of ruminative thought and stress on depressive disorders.

Dr. Ciesla investigates various factors that influence people's risk for developing unipolar depressive disorders. He's especially interested in the influence of a ruminative response style in the onset and maintenance of depression. Stressful life events happen to everyone, but how a person responds to stress can have a profound effect on a person's long-term psychological functioning. People who tend to ruminate, or excessively dwell on stress when it occurs, seem likely to become depressed. Unfortunately, the negative effects of rumination can be magnified in some individuals. Describing his own research, Dr. Ciesla notes that "this effect is particularly strong for some people already at risk for depression, such as individuals with low self-esteem. Risk for depression can also change within an individual over time, and I'm particularly interested in understanding how adolescents develop negative thinking patterns." His research will obviously garner attention from fellow researchers and clinicians, and congratulations also go to Jeff for recently being awarded an Ohio Challenge Grant that will continue to support his on-going efforts to understand depression.



Jeff Ciesla

On his personal side, Dr. Ciesla can almost be viewed as an enigma. On one hand, his office is adorned with an arboretum-level number of plants and he regularly limbers up with yoga in the morning. On the other hand, Dr. Ciesla frequently pulls practical jokes on another junior faculty (Dan Neal) and regularly attends Kent State hockey games. When Dr. Ciesla mentions how deadly the puck can be when it gets shot into the stands, his eyes glimmer. Well, perhaps the tranquility of his office and the intensity on the ice both serve to help Dr. Ciesla ward off the effects of stress in his own life! With his calm demeanor and enthusiasm for research, no doubt Jeff will have a positive impact on everyone in the Psychology Department.

AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. MARY ANN P. STEPHENS, CHAIR

Last spring, your roving reporter decided to interview Dr. Stephens to see how she assessed her job as she completed her first year as chair of our department.

DCR- Let's start with the tough one—Why on earth did you decide to take on this job?

MAPS- Well, it was not something I ever aspired to do, but a couple of things came together that made it seem of interest. First, we had a new administration whose goals and values aligned with the department. Second, we had hired a very strong group of junior faculty that are very productive and enthusiastic, helping to move our department forward. Third, there is a very strong department staff that I knew could support me on day-to day matters, so I could focus on broader issues. And I suppose that I also felt that I owed something to our department, a kind of “payback”, if you will.

D- But didn't you get any warning or advice from Jack? (Ed note: That would be Jack Graham, spouse and former chair for eight years)

M- Well, Jack's experience was part of the reason why I didn't want to be chair. I was well aware of what the job entailed, having seen the demands on him. But the department structure had been reorganized since his term ended. One way he did help was in terms of my disability, which I felt might get in the way. He got me to think about what it would take for me to do the job and the accommodations that I would need.

D- Does he offer advice?

M- Only at work. We try to keep my chair duties at the office and not bring issues home at night.

D- Have you had any particular successes so far? What are your goals?

M- At this point, I have mainly just put things in motion. We have set the stage for new directions. I do feel very good about the promotions and the staff reclassifications. The faculty has been very supportive and I feel validated. We are going to be doing some things differently.

As for goals, I would identify three:

1). I want to increase our reputation as a scholarly department. We are well recognized in the university, but our reputation nationally doesn't match our strengths. I want us to be known for something.

2). In terms of instruction, I want to continue our already excellent graduate program. Our most interesting challenge is how to reach out to undergraduate students. They tend to feel anonymous and we want to draw them in through personal connections.

Maybe technology can be helpful here. We want them to feel connected with us. Basically, the problem is: so many of them, so few of us.

3.) I would like us to involve our alumni and the community with the department. It's not quite clear how we can do this, but these people know the careers out there—they are in them—and could provide great advice and help. Development is part of the answer but not the whole thing.

D- How about any particular problems?

M- Well, the funding picture is a constant worry, although I remain a “naïve optimist”.

D- What do you worry about the most?

M- I want us to do things differently and to initiate change. But that can be disruptive and put people on the defensive, so I want to foster change without destroying the collegiality that has been such a wonderful hallmark of our department over the years.

D- Since our national reputation is largely based on our productivity and our graduate program, where would you rank us as at this point?

M- I would love to say that we're above the mid-point. I think we are, in fact, above the mid-point but unfortunately our reputation is below that. So, I would like to bring our reputation in line with the reality of our quality, and at the same time move our real quality even higher. As you may recall, there was a national study in which our department was ranked seventh in productivity. Given the disparity between our productivity and the national ranking, you can see why Kent State's Psychology department was also called the second-most underrated department in the country! (Ed. note: A sister school that won't be named here was considered one of the most overrated depts.)

D- What do you feel is best about us?

M- Oh, I would say the creativity and the energy of our faculty.

D- On a lighter note, what is the funniest thing that has happened since you became chair?

M- People don't realize, but I can hear everything said in the department hallway. It acts like a megaphone, so I get to hear all kinds of interesting comments and conversations.

For up to date information on news and events in the Department of Psychology, please visit <http://dept.kent.edu/psychology/newsevents.cfm>



WHAT'S UP DOC?

Maria Zaragoza joined the Department of Psychology in 1984, the same year that she graduated from Johns Hopkins University. Her dissertation, which clarified the processes by which a false suggestion could distort a person's memory for an event, is considered a classic. Her subsequent research, conducted in collaboration with many Kent State students, has yielded important discoveries about eyewitness memory, and has led to publications in premiere journals such as Psychological Science. A recent discovery in her lab concerns how false memories can be created by asking a person to fabricate information about the parts of an event that they initially report not having seen (e.g., “Tell me what you think might have happened.”) Later, the person may include some of this fabricated information in their eyewitness recall. In recent studies with her graduate student, Quin Chrobak, they show that this mistake is especially likely if the fabricated information provides a causal explanation for the events that the person actually saw.

As satisfying as these scientific contributions are, Dr. Zaragoza takes more pride in the success of the graduate students whom she has mentored. Many have gone on to publish their own work and to become leaders in their departments.

Dr. Zaragoza has held several administrative positions in the department, including chair, graduate coordinator, and director of experimental training. Among her accomplishments in these roles, she is most proud of the successful fund-raising effort that she organized to name a seminar room in Roy Lilly's honor. “Coach” Lilly was a dear friend. Maria regards him as the epitome of what has made the department a good place to work. One of her fondest memories is of the comic roast that Roy and other faculty members gave her at a party to celebrate her becoming chair of the department.

Outside of work, Dr. Zaragoza and her husband, Dr. Steve Fountain, devote much of their time to their daughters, Stephanie and Natalie. Both girls train extensively for competitions in modern dance. Those of us who remember when Stephanie was born still find it hard to believe that she is now a senior in high school!

To end on a lighter note, we asked Dr. Zaragoza for her preferences on a couple of life's key dimensions. Here is what she had to say: Ballet or Jazz Dance? “Jazz, that's what my kids do.” Experiments or correlational studies? “Experiments rule.” Explicit memory or implicit memory? “I am conscious of a preference for explicit memory.” Tall people or short people? “With the possible exception of Bill Merriman, short people, no question.”

NEW ADMINISTRATIVE FACES AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY



DR. LESTER A. LEFTON, KENT STATE UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Dr. Lester A. Lefton became Kent State's 11th president in 2006. Previously, he was senior vice president and provost at Tulane University; dean of arts and sciences at George Washington University; and dean at the University of South Carolina. An award-winning teacher and prolific researcher in experimental psychology, Dr. Lefton has earned a national reputation as an advocate for undergraduate education and a leader of advancements in undergraduate and graduate education. He is active in a variety of regional economic and cultural initiatives and organizations, including the boards of NorTech, the Greater Akron Chamber and public television Channels 45/49. At the national level, Dr. Lefton serves on the American Council on Education's (ACE) Commission on Effective Leadership.



DR. TIMOTHY S. MOERLAND, KENT STATE DEAN OF THE COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Before coming to Kent State, Dr. Timothy S. Moerland served as chair of Florida State University's Department of Biological Science. At Florida State, Dr. Moerland also served as associate dean for research for the College of Arts and Sciences, primarily responsible for development and coordination of new research initiatives and oversight of contract and grant activity. Both grant and contract funding increased significantly during his tenure, with a large measure of growth coming in collaborative projects between departments and colleges. Dr. Moerland's research interests include biochemical and physiological mechanisms of temperature compensation; muscular physiology and the energetics of muscular contraction; and intracellular diffusion and molecular transport. He received an FSU Developing Scholar Award and a University Teaching Award. He co-holds a U.S. patent for the Biomolecular-based Actuator. He holds a bachelor's degree in biological science (high honors) from Michigan State University, and master's and doctorate degrees in zoology from the University of Maine.



DR. ROBERT G. FRANK, KENT STATE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST

Dr. Robert G. Frank became Provost for Kent State in 2007. He has a long history in administration, academic service and professional practice. A board certified clinical psychologist, Dr. Frank previously was a dean and professor of Clinical and Health Psychology for the College of Public Health and Health Professions, University of Florida, Gainesville. Dr. Frank, who became dean at Florida in 1995, also directed the Florida Center for Medicaid and the Uninsured. Prior administrative and academic posts include service at the University of Missouri, Columbia, the National Academy of Sciences, the National Institute of Disability and Rehabilitation Research and the Missouri Department of Health. Dr. Frank holds undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of New Mexico. Professional memberships include the American Psychological Association, of which he has been a Fellow. In 2003, he also received a Distinguished Service Award from the association.

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IN THE LOOP



In this issue we feature one of Dr. Maria Zaragoza's students, Dr. Jennifer Ackil. Jen received her Ph.D. in cognition in 1995 and went directly to Gustavus Adolphus College in Minnesota to begin her career. Having come from a liberal arts program herself, Jen enjoys the challenge of teaching in a similar situation. In addition to teaching a variety of classroom courses and supervising more than a dozen Honors theses, she maintains a program of research on the effect of forced self-generated misinformation on eyewitness memory. In addition, following the tornado that struck Minnesota a few years ago, Dr. Ackil began another line of research that is concerned with children's recall of traumatic events and how the children talk with their mothers about the scary events. Over the years her research has appeared in such outlets as *Journal of Cognition*

and *Development, Psychological Science, Developmental Psychology, and Psychological Bulletin*.

Dr. Ackil's ability as a leader with a judicious temperament has been recognized with her elections to chair of the department, and as representative and later chair of the Faculty Development Committee. To keep her busy, she has at various times been appointed to several collegewide committees, including the position of Co-Director of the John S. Kendall Center for Engaged Learning, the Provost's Council (to give sage advice), the New Building Planning Committee, and the Academic Affairs Coordinating Committee. Jen must not be able to say "no" to service requests, as she has served on another 15 or so committees, ranging from the College Judicial Board to the role of Faculty Advisor to Psi Chi, along with numerous search committees. In the community, she has also

managed to serve as president of the board of directors of Kids' Corner Childcare Center.

Jen reports having many fine memories of Kent and the training she received, and has a special place in her heart for Maria, who was her mentor and role model. As Jen says, Maria "not only taught me what it takes to be a fine scientist, she also taught me how to be a good faculty member and colleague." Jen recalls that Maria's devotion to her students was illustrated a number of times. One example is that when Maria was in labor with her first daughter, Steffi, she made Steve stop at Kent Hall to bring Jen the materials she needed to run her subjects for her thesis.

For fun, and to survive the Minnesota winters, Jen has taken up cross-country skiing. Her two children, Jackson (6) and Olivia (3), keep Jen busy at home and help her to enjoy life in the northern climes.