

InSight

The Newsletter of the
Department of Psychology

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A COMMITMENT TO

Diversity, Inclusion, and Equality

In response to the national movement to increase awareness and eliminate racial discrimination, faculty and graduate student representatives in the **Clinical Psychology Program** are committed to making issues of diversity central to our education. We invited four outside speakers who conduct research on diversity and/or who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC) themselves. A number of faculty participated in the Academics for Black Survival initiative, joined accountability groups, and continue to discuss readings on racism, diversity, equity, and inclusion.

We formed a committee to draft a Clinical Psychology program diversity statement to post on our website for applicants to our program. We also made GREs optional this year to decrease bias and the cost of applying to the graduate program. We now allow unofficial transcripts until an offer of admission is made, which also lowers the costs of applying to the program. Additionally, all applicant interviews for the coming year will be held online, not only to address the public health emergency, but also to reduce the cost for applicants. We plan to consider making these changes in the application process permanent.

The topic of diversity is now the first item on the agenda at every clinical faculty meeting. Zahra Amer, a clinical psychology graduate student, formed a reading and video group to focus on multicultural issues to meet throughout the year. Psychological Clinic Director Lettie Flores obtained a grant for the Sleeves 4 Needs Program to help diverse populations obtain access to mental health screening and therapy. There is no doubt more that we can do and we intend to maintain our focus in the coming year.

The **Counseling Psychology Program** faculty and students are committed to multiculturalism, social justice, and combatting racism in all its forms. Just prior to the fall semester, counseling faculty held a retreat to reflect on our program and admissions processes and how these may pose barriers to students and/or applicants of color. Based on these conversations, we voted to remove the GRE requirement this year and have seen our largest and most diverse applicant pool to date.



We also have invited two outside colloquium speakers for 2021 who conduct research on diversity and who identify as Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC). We are thrilled to host Della Mosley, an assistant professor at the University of Florida and co-founder of Academics for Black Survival and Wellness in mid-February.

Many of our faculty remain involved in diversity-related research and are engaged in diversity initiatives in the department to promote change at larger levels both on campus and in the community. Several of our counseling psychology students are active members of the department's Diversity Council and are working to analyze the results of the anti-Blackness survey the council conducted in the fall. Our counseling student representatives at our program faculty meetings continue to play a vital role in informing us about diversity-related concerns experienced in the classroom environment, so that we can improve our learning spaces. We plan to continue to build on these beginning efforts in the coming year.

Members of our **undergraduate program** engaged in several initiatives to enhance our equity and inclusion efforts. In fall 2019, members of our department were invited by the Offices of the Provost and Teaching and Learning Innovation to participate in a project to explore and reduce equity gaps in courses that enroll large numbers of first-year students.

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The data for PSYC 110: General Psychology showed that, over the past four years, equity gaps based on first-generation college student status, Pell eligibility (an indicator of low income), and race/ethnicity had closed or even reversed slightly. We shared specific, evidence-informed strategies we have employed in the course with other departments and discussed collaborative strategies for further addressing equity gaps across courses before the pandemic hit. In addition to the department's efforts to offer the highest quality online teaching and learning, spearheaded by Bob DuBois, lecturer in psychology, we also increased our focus on training our instructors in best practices related to equity and inclusion.

In August 2020, prior to the start of fall classes, Kelley Haynes-Mendez, VP for Diversity and International Relations for the Society for the Teaching of Psychology (STP) and an associate professor at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, led a workshop on inclusive teaching for our department. Haynes-Mendez focused on cultural humility, managing difficult dialogues, trauma-informed teaching, committing to systemic change, and restorative justice.

Finally, Professor Erin Hardin significantly redesigned her PSYC 528: College Teaching Seminar to include greater emphasis on anti-racist pedagogy and how to talk about race and racism in the classroom effectively. This course is required for all graduate students in the department.



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TODD MOORE

Professor and Acting Head
Department of Psychology

Challenging Times

Twenty-twenty was certainly a stressful year in so many ways, so it seems only fitting to begin this newsletter by finally bringing a close to 2020 and welcoming everyone to 2021. This has been a challenging time for the department as we continue to contend with COVID-19. Students, staff, and faculty in our department adapted as best we could. We created several dozen online and hybrid (mix of online and virtual) classes over the past several months, and many of us continue to improve our online and hybrid teaching efforts into this spring semester. Despite these challenges, there are many exciting updates we share throughout this newsletter related to our efforts last year and goals for the new year.

As the items here were being submitted for this newsletter, our spring semester was just beginning. Beginning January 1, Deb Welsh started a much-deserved leave from her department head duties to focus on her research. I will be serving as acting head until June 15 and will do my best to fill her rather large shoes. We also started this semester with a virtual departmental diversity training retreat for all psychology graduate students, staff, and faculty. The retreat was facilitated by Anneliese Singh, associate provost for diversity and faculty development at Tulane University. Professor Singh is the author of more than 100 articles and several books. She has been honored with numerous national awards for her work in social justice organizing and community building, and is the past president of the Society of Counseling Psychology. The retreat included both formal sharing of information by Singh as well as facilitated breakout rooms to engage each other in difficult conversations aimed to help the department become more culturally competent. It was another step in what will undoubtedly be a lengthy process to resist anti-Black racism and white supremacy, and we were very fortunate that Professor Singh agreed to help further us along this journey.

As you will see, most of the articles in this newsletter focus on departmental efforts to meet online teaching needs in the face of COVID-19 (HUGE thank you to Bob DuBois!) and to address structural racism and become more culturally competent students, staff, faculty, researchers, and teachers. It is our pleasure to share this information with you and hope everyone stays safe and healthy this year.

Online Courses Superhero

Like other departments on campus, psychology switched to virtual courses in spring 2020, and did as well as we could do to round out that semester. Unlike other departments on campus, however, psychology has Bob DuBois, winner of a 2020 College Convocation Teaching Award and an expert in online teaching and learning. During the summer of 2020, he provided faculty and graduate students with a wealth of information and advice for shaping our online courses for summer and fall of 2020, and now into spring of 2021 for many of us.

"I found his advice and patience a lifesaver during the ramp up to online teaching and continuing through the hiccups."

-Gordon Burghardt, Professor

"Dr. Bob was always available to help fix bugs, and was a huge help to me in increasing my online teaching skills. He showed me numerous new approaches and apps to incorporate into my online courses that helped both me and my students."

-Daniela Corbetta, Professor

"This past summer, I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Bob to design my online course for PSYC 110. I can honestly say that without Dr. Bob's mentorship, my online course this semester would have been incredibly stressful not only for myself as the instructor, but also for my students. Over and over again, I got positive feedback from students about various aspects of my course design, and without exception these were things I learned from Dr. Bob. He demonstrates a high level of care for both students and faculty, and it doesn't go unnoticed. I'm incredibly grateful for Dr. Bob's mentorship and guidance—he could not have come to UT at a better time."

-Adam Maughan, Graduate Student

"I have never felt as stressed during my time at UT as I did this summer faced with preparing to teach a large undergraduate class online for the first time. It would not have been possible without Dr. Bob's support, guidance, and practical help, which he gave unstintingly all summer long. The class has gone well and I have very much enjoyed it. Thank you, Dr. Bob!"

-Jenny Macfie, Professor



WELCOME

Hollie Pellosmaa

Hollie Pellosmaa received a master's degree in health psychology and neuroscience and a PhD in experimental psychology from the University of Texas at Arlington. She has taught a wide range of courses at UT Arlington as well as Tusculum College in Knoxville and at Maryville College.

Her training and research fits squarely in the interface of health psychology and neuroscience. She currently teaches PSYC 301: Foundations of Behavioral Neuroscience and PSYC 320: Motivation, and we look forward to her teaching additional courses including neuroscience labs.





Making the Adjustment

From new pets to outdoor activities, faculty members share what worked for them as they adjusted to COVID-19 in 2020.

Deb Baldwin engaged in “field research” to help reduce stress associated with the pandemic. Field research of course refers to golf! It provides a wonderful release, and it is a healthy activity. Golf, prayer, and staying connected with friends and family have been her stress buffers.

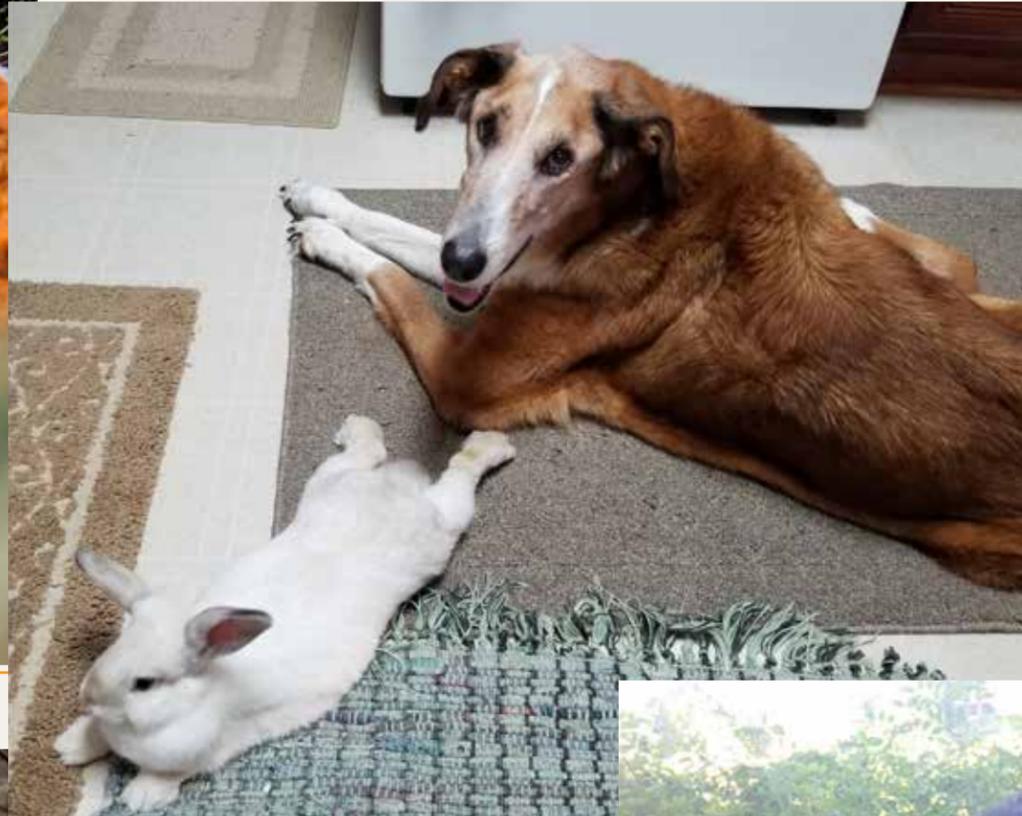
Matt Cooper is dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic by getting outside whenever possible. Hiking, biking, and kayaking are great activities to combat Zoom fatigue.

Bob DuBois and his family sought out many furry companions to shelter-in-place with, including two cats, four rats, a hedgehog, and two new puppies. In addition to pets, he recommends incorporating music into your breaks and day. Thankfully, Michael Olson hooked him up with some great UT orange speakers and DuBois has been using music to welcome students to his Zoom sessions, to unwind between sessions, to stay well during stressful times, and to keep himself focused while he does deep work.

Lettie Flores enjoyed getting to know her new kitten, Kiko, watching lots of shows completely unrelated to the pandemic or politics, and reading a lot of books. She also benefited from taking lots of walks in the neighborhood and enjoying the changing leaves and temperatures, eating great food her spouse cooked, and baking and sharing, which makes the house smell great and gives her a chance to show some love to friends.

Todd Freeberg does a lot of his research outdoors, and Mother Nature works wonders for stress. Yoga, running (which he still does not like), a wonderful family, and an old dog (R.I.P., Calla!) and a young rabbit helped a lot!

Jenny Macfie has enjoyed spending time with her new puppy, Zollie.



Pilot Program: Research Experience for Undergraduates

The Department of Psychology is working to develop a pilot Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU). We had planned to start this pilot REU last summer, but COVID-19 got in our way. We are now working to have the pilot program running for this upcoming summer, even if parts of it are virtual.

Our goal is to have five to six Tennessee State or Fisk University undergraduate students come to our campus during the mini-term time frame (May 2021) and engage in research with a faculty member in psychology for three weeks. Participating undergraduate students would be matched with a psychology faculty research mentor and would receive housing in a UT residence hall, a campus dining plan, and a small stipend. Research mentors would also receive a small stipend.

We hope to use the pilot project to support an application for federal funding for an REU with the intention of helping create research opportunities for students from Tennessee HBCU's in order to help diversify the psychology field in Tennessee in general, as well as building a relationship and pipeline for students from TSU and Fisk to graduate school in psychology at UT specifically.

ADDRESSING RACIAL INJUSTICE

In August 2020, Deb Welsh, along with members of the Department of Psychology Executive Committee and Diversity Council, sent an email to all psychology students, staff, faculty, and advisory board members outlining how department leadership is addressing racial injustice in the department. We reprinted parts of the message below for our larger psychology community to see the efforts we are engaged in to address racial injustice at UT.

This has been a challenging, uncomfortable, traumatic, and exhausting summer as we have tried to navigate the current racism reckoning that is going on throughout the country and within our department in the context of the COVID-19 crisis.

A number of psychology faculty and students, including most psychology faculty leaders, participated in the intensive seven-day online Academic for Black Survival and Wellness training program early in the summer that was organized by Della Mosley and Pearis Bellamy of the University of Florida in collaboration with a large team that included Jioni Lewis and Kirsten Gonzalez. Psychology faculty and students, especially white faculty and students, have been trying to learn and grow. We've been reading a lot this summer including Ibram X. Kendi's *How to be an Antiracist*, Robin DiAngelo's *White Fragility*, Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*, Ijeoma Oluo's *So You Want to Talk about Race* among other books and have been working our way through Anneliese Singh's *The Racial Healing Handbook*. A number of faculty, including faculty in leadership positions, have formed small, ongoing accountability groups to continue our personal development in resisting anti-Black racism and white supremacy. Several department members have also proposed initiating departmental anti-racism and social justice book groups to begin in the fall. Groups of graduate students, including a group of Black psychology graduate students, have also been meeting during the summer to provide support to each other and to talk about ideas for change.



In addition to working on individual personal and professional development, we have been listening to students, staff, and faculty in our department in individual and group meetings and psychology leaders have been meeting to discuss ideas for a set of actions to promote social justice and address systemic racism within our department. Kalynn Schulz and Kirsten Gonzalez, as the co-chairs of the Psychology Diversity Council, have been involved in a number of these meetings along with other departmental leaders including me, associate heads, and all program directors this summer. Kalynn and Kirsten are also working on an anonymous survey focused on assessing anti-Blackness and safety within the department that you should receive in the coming weeks. We will continue to meet with students and faculty individually and in groups throughout the coming year to listen to your experiences and ideas and to provide support and to create plans of action.

We have begun a few actions toward addressing racially inequitable departmental policies and structures this summer and want to put in place structures and policies that will support an ongoing, long-term commitment to continued growth and departmental change.

A departmental committee of faculty members has been working since last fall to carefully read our lengthy departmental bylaws document and propose revisions for outdated policies. During the past summer, this committee specifically focused on identifying policies in our bylaws that produce or sustain racial inequities. We will also hire an external consultant from outside UT, who has expertise in racial issues and social justice, and who can use fresh eyes to detect policies to consider changing to create a more equitable department. We will discuss problematic policies as a department and will work to revise our bylaws over the coming academic year.

We must think and act holistically to change the policies, structures, and systems in our department that inherently privilege some more than others. These policies, structures, and systems have been in place for a long time and real change will require substantial effort and long-term, ongoing commitment. In recognition of this, we will propose to add the Psychology Diversity Council chair(s) as a permanent member of the departmental executive committee, the primary policy-making departmental committee.

I want to acknowledge the advocacy and effort of a number of psychology faculty and students who continue to demand that we build a more just and anti-racist department and world. Many of you have long advocated and spoken about racism and injustice and have been frustrated with the pace of departmental change. In addition, we want to acknowledge the pain and trauma experienced by members of our community surrounding the violence and murders of Black people in our nation. We need to provide support, compassion, and flexibility to members of our community who experience challenging times.

The commitment to transformative, lasting change to create a more just and equitable psychology department is the responsibility of all of us, particularly those of us in majority communities. We are committed to reading, reflecting, learning, listening, and taking action to create systemic change. We will make mistakes. It is important that our fears of making mistakes not discourage us from action or from expressing our voices. I encourage and welcome your active participation, courage, compassion, flexibility, and tolerance for discomfort as we continue this journey together. We can seize this moment and contribute toward making a more just and equitable department and world.

IN SOLIDARITY,

Psychology Executive Committee and Diversity Council Co-Chairs Todd Freeberg, Kirsten Gonzalez, Erin Hardin, Jeff Larsen, Gina Owens, Shannon Ross-Sheehy, Kalynn Schulz, Greg Stuart, and Deb Welsh

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