Letter from the Chair

Welcome to the reboot of the Belmont University Psychological Science newsletter – the enPSYCHlopedia!! The first edition of enPSYCHlopedia came out in the spring of 1990, and the last edition was printed in 2009 – 9 years ago. In 2009, the department was physically located in “the hut”, the one story building located next to the soccer field. There was one classroom, one computer/everything lab space, and a tiny animal facility. The faculty consisted of myself, William Bailey, Lonnie Yandell, Pete Giordano (chair), Seraphine Shen Miller, and Bruce “Woody” Caine. Mary Godwin was the administrative assistant, and there were approximately 80 psychology majors. The intro psychology class was a 3 credit course. If you were around at this time, you may also remember the uninvited guests which included feral cats, brown recluse spiders, and mice. However, it was our home and we made many great memories there.

Today, in 2018, there have been many new and exciting changes in the department. We are physically located on the 4th floor of McWhorter Hall (the land where “the hut” was located is now the site of the law school building). There are EIGHT dedicated lab spaces including an expanded animal facility. Drs. Bailey and Caine retired, as well as Mary Godwin. The neuroscience program at Belmont is officially part of the department and there are now eight faculty members. There are approximately 160 psychology majors and another 40 or so neuroscience majors. A new 4 credit (i.e., class plus lab) introduction to Psychological Science class was added to the curriculum in addition to the 3 credit General Psychology class. The uninvited guests have disappeared! Finally, Dr. Giordano stepped down as chair in spring of 2013 and passed the mantel on to me. It has been a tremendous 9 years since the last edition of the newsletter! It’s also the perfect time to resurrect the newsletter. To our alumni, welcome back and please be in touch. To our current students, send pictures and ideas for future editions. To prospective students, we hope this newsletter gives you an idea of the absolutely AWE-SOME program and research we have here at Belmont. Feel free to contact us for more information or come for a visit!

Linda
Linda Jones, PhD
Associate Professor and Chair
Belmont University

Quote of the season

“You don’t have to choose between being scientific and being compassionate”
- Robert Sapolsky in Behave: The Biology of Humans at Our Best and Worst

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Wayne Barnard, Ph.D.
After a number of years in clinical practice and in higher education administration, I spent 8 years working in the global non-profit sector with International Justice Mission. In all aspects of my varied career, I’ve been able to leverage my educational and professional experience to impact my world in positive ways. It’s a blessing now to be at Belmont University, lecturing full-time in the Department of Psychological Sciences and sharing any wisdom and practice I’ve picked up throughout my professional journey. Advising students and teaching intro, abnormal, and clinical psychology, as well as group dynamics and lifespan development, provides me the opportunity to do what I love most, connecting with students in and out of the classroom, and helping to bring alive the clinical work of psychologists and psychotherapists as a meaningful and impactful career.

Lauren Gilbert, Ph.D.
I joined the department in 2015 from the University of Kentucky with a focus on child development and psychophysiology. In general, I am interested in the various factors that moderate regular and abnormal child development, including financial stress, immigration, parental engagement, marital problems, nutrition, and school factors. I have a special interest in how these environmental factors predict school performance and what can be done to help best meet the needs of children in our area. To that note, I have been working to help bring healthy marriage and family initiatives to the greater Nashville area. More recently, however, I have been inspired by working with Belmont students on the issues that affect college student learning and performance. We have developed research teams to study the effects of sleep deprivation on learning, memory, and attention, something all students can relate to with the busyness of their schedules! Overall, I love working with students and love collaborating with them and letting their brilliant ideas further my inspiration in research at Belmont!

Peter J. Giordano, Ph.D.
Joining the Belmont faculty in the fall of 1989, I am a clinical psychologist and still love teaching students about scientific psychology. I am currently engaged in two lines of scholarship, both of which relate to the upper-level lab courses I teach. The first line of scholarship has grown out of the Psychological Testing course. I love teaching this course in part because students in the lab always come up with interesting validation studies of new measures of a construct. Right now, for example, I’m working with students on writing up a study on a new measure of absorption (a personality trait characterized by the tendency to become absorbed in activities or mental imagery) that students first developed in this lab. The new scale is called the MAMA (Measure of Adaptive and Maladaptive Absorption), and we collected data over several semesters and are now going to run a few more analyses and then send it off to a journal for publication consideration. The second area of scholarship is theoretical and is related to the Personality Psychology course I teach. In this domain, I am interested in intersections between Western and Chinese conceptions of personality and the self. In particular, I’ve been seeking to build connections between modern Western conceptions of human personality and ideas of personal cultivation from the ancient classical Confucian tradition. I’ve published several papers on this topic and am currently working on another theoretical paper with two psychology majors.

Linda D. Jones, Ph.D.
I have been a faculty member at Belmont since 2000 and chair of the department since 2010. My background is in the area of Health Psychology with an emphasis on women and minority health issues. I typically teach Health Psychology, Cross Cultural Psychology, and Human Sexuality classes. Lately, I have been working with high school students, having received a grant from the American Psychological Foundation to assist high school students in Nashville with their senior capstone projects. In addition to meeting with students during the academic year, 20 high school students stayed on campus for a week during the summer developing advanced skills in psychological research. During the past two summers (2016, 2017) I was a faculty member with the Month in London study abroad trip. Finally, as the advisor for PC2 (i.e., Psychology Club/Psi Chi) for the past 10 years, I am extremely proud of the many accomplishments and awards they have garnered over the years.
Patrick Morse, Ph.D.

My background is in Social & Personality Psychology, so I find myself interested in a whole host of topics in those fields. Throughout graduate school I considered the manner by which personality traits and situational characteristics influence human behavior, at times considering these topics in healthcare environments. For example, dispositionally negative folks tend to have worse healthcare experiences regardless of the care that is actually provided. I’ve also done some research on intentional personality change, considering whether people can intentionally and effortlessly make changes to their personality. This topic has resulted in the opportunity to explore a variety of interesting questions, and most recently I’ve been working with a few students to see what this might look like in romantic relationships. For example, we’re currently exploring the manner by which people present themselves favorably in the interest of attracting a partner. All said, though, this is by no means an exhaustive list of research questions I’m interested in exploring.

Carole Scherling, Ph.D.

I completed my PhD at the University of Ottawa, a postdoctoral fellowship at UCSF and occupied an Assistant Professor position at USF prior to joining Belmont. As Director of the Neuroscience program, I am currently restructuring the curriculum and introducing new Neuroscience courses, making Belmont a Neuro-studies destination. My primary research interest lies in studying cognitive capacities and impairments, particularly in aging cohorts experiencing mild impairments. I am trained in using a variety of psychophysiological, neuroimaging and affective tools in my research and am excited to share and train these techniques with our current students. She is currently building the neuroimaging capability in research and teaching at Belmont and is always keen to engage in unique studies suggested by students. New ideas and perspectives are always welcome!

Timothy Schoenfeld, Ph.D.

I am a behavioral neuroscientist by trade and am interested in how the brain and behavior are intimately connected. From my graduate and post-doctoral training, I studied how plasticity within the brain (how the brain physically and electrically changes) is related to stress and mood disorders by studying models of depression, anxiety, and PTSD in experimental rodents. From this conceptual framework, I look for inspiration within the two upper-division psychology lab courses I teach, Learning & Conditioning and Physiological Psychology. Currently, I am conducting research with a student on how a depressive phenotype in aging rats produces memory impairments and how the mood stabilizer, Seroquel, can help recover both depressive-like behavior and memory capability in aging rats. This summer, I will be gathering a research team of 7 students to design and implement rodent studies to examine how experience effects mood and learning behavior and how the brain coordinates these adaptive responses.

Lonnie R. Yandell, Ph.D.

I am a Professor of Psychological Science who started teaching at Belmont in 1985. I have been happily married for over 42 years, and have 2 daughters who graduated from Belmont. My oldest daughter also has a law degree from Belmont and my youngest is now in the Peach Corp in Costa Rica. My beautiful granddaughter is a high school student in Nashville. My primary professional interest since I started at Belmont has been undergraduate research and an Honors course in consciousness. I enjoy using technology for teaching and am interested in new technologies such as virtual reality. All of my current research is student initiated, mostly involving topics developed from my classes. For example, my current Sensation and Perception research groups are exploring topics involving pupillometry and affective words, virtual reality and exercise, social rejection and animacy, reaction time and racial bias, food satisfaction and guilt, and color and memory. Recently two students and I have submitted articles for publication. One article concerns intragroup motivational effects on group functioning and the other on the effects of Institutional responses to racial diversity. Also, I love to hear from alumni!

INTRODUCTION TO THE FACULTY

Spring Semester Outside Speakers

Georges Naasan, MD.—University of California, San Francisco
Case Studies to Peer Into the Brain

Janice Cathey and Susan Dendtler—HaLe Mind and Body Integrative Healthcare
Mindfulness, Meditation, and Psychology for Greater Health

Roman Presson, Ph.D.—LifeChange Counseling Services and Marriage Counseling Center
Developing Healthy Relationships
Spotlight on Alumni: Megan Verret (‘92)

Hi...I am the VP of Global Learning and Organizational Development for Yum! Brands. Our name may not sound familiar but I know you have heard of our great restaurant brands... Taco Bell, Pizza Hut, and KFC! I started at Yum! Brands over 19 years ago, right out of school from finishing my Ph.D. in I/O Psychology. Before graduate school, I was a student at Belmont, majoring in Psychology and Business Administration. I started at Yum! as a lowly intern, hoping to actually get my foot in the door for a full-time gig. Well, that dream became a reality and since that time, I've held numerous roles at Yum! Hard work has grown my career but my background in Psychology has honestly been the foundation of my success. My degree in I/O set a foundation of understanding human behavior in the workplace but classes like Personality Psychology have helped me as an internal Executive Coach, Research Methods helped me slice and dice internal employee data, and Social Psychology helped me better understand the dynamics of our internal culture (just to name a few). More importantly, professors like Dr. Yandell and Dr. Giordano gave me the encouragement and support that have stayed with me for a lifetime. I cherish my time at Belmont and feel very proud to have graduated from the Psychology Department!

Research Highlights

Summer Research (SURFS)

In the summer of 2017, over six weeks, four psychology majors completed a research project with Dr. Patrick Morse in personality psychology. Each student took his/her personal direction with the project to incorporate their research passions with Dr. Morse’s experience with volitional personality change, which is the process of intentionally altering one’s personality. This research was completed through Belmont’s Summer Undergraduate Research Fellows Symposium (SURFS) program, where students of multiple scientific disciplines gain hands-on research experience.

Member of the program, Reed Priest, writes, "The SURFS experience is a blessing for all developing scientists. The one-on-one interactions with faculty and other students creates an environment for intellectual discussion and collaboration. I most enjoyed Dr. Morse individualizing the research by encouraging us to pursue our own research interests with his.”

Students ended the program by presenting and discussing their research in poster sessions, eager to share their work with others.

2017 Science Undergraduate Research Symposium (SURS)

This fall, 83 Belmont students (psychology majors and minors and neuroscience majors) presented their independent research as part of personal and/or upper-division lab research projects in psychology. Over the course of the evening, students shared their findings through a total of 19 oral presentations and 4 poster presentations. SURS is the culmination of a semester’s long period of innovation, hard-work, and perseverance. It is an opportunity to celebrate our achievements by sharing our work among friends, colleagues, and family and with the greater Belmont and Nashville community.

Students Ryan Jensen and Sarah O’Hanlon create their online survey for data collection.

Psychology major Eason Taylor presenting his group’s SURS research poster

Psychology major Ragan Wilson presenting her group’s findings at SURS

What are the Big Five Personality Traits?
- Agreeableness
- Conscientiousness
- Emotionality
- Openness
- Neuroticism
Psychology in China - Dr. Giordano

Almost every summer, I co-lead a group of students on a three-week trip to China. Each summer the itinerary is a bit different, though we always spend time in Beijing to visit places like the Great Wall, the Temple of Heaven, and Tiananmen Square and the Forbidden City. We also spend time in central China visiting places like Xi’an (Terracotta Soldiers), the Longmen Buddhist Grottoes, Foxconn (where your iPhone was probably made), and Maria’s Big House of Hope, an orphanage for children with developmental problems. We often also schedule time in out-of-the-way places like Kunming or Dali in southern China or Huangshan Mountain in Eastern China. Each June the schedule is a bit different, but it is always a totally incredible trip.

Psychology in Scotland - Dr. Morse

During Maymester 2018, I will be teaching Sport Psychology for a study abroad program in Scotland. We’ll be visiting Edinburgh, Glasgow, and St. Andrews and going on a variety of sport- and culture-related excursions in order to better understand the interactions of sport, psychology, and Scottish culture. This is a new study abroad program so we’re keeping it to just around 10 students, but we’re open to expanding in the future!

Psychology in England, France, and Italy - Dr. Barnard

“The Art of Living Well: Culture, Cooking, and Cardio” is an interdisciplinary Maymester program that brings together opportunities to study chemistry (with a lab), music, psychology (no lab), and wellness, with several linked course options. Experiences in London, Paris, and Rome allow students to integrate their studies into a deeper understanding of what it means to live happy, healthy, and helpful lives. The psychology course focuses on the nature and constructs of positive psychology as the scientific study of positive human functioning and flourishing on biological, personal, cultural, and global levels.

Psychology in Northern Ireland - Dr. Barnard

Hosted by the Senator George J. Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice at Queen’s University Belfast, one of Belmont’s new, elite partner institutions, this program will offer an interdisciplinary perspective of conflict transformation and social justice. Queen’s and Belmont faculty will help students examine the history of conflicts and processes of social justice not only on the island of Ireland but around the world. Case studies will include Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East, South Asia and South America. Topics include the importance of security and transitional justice, as well as the role of restorative justice in democracy, how religion impacts peace-building, and the understanding of moral psychology principles which will help students to further understand conflict. Excursions to archaeological, historical and cultural sites in Belfast and beyond, with music and dance evenings, are included, as well as weekend excursions: a “Game of Thrones” tour in Northern Ireland, a tour of the Republic of Ireland (Galway, the Cliffs of Moher, and Dublin).
Brain Awareness - What’s Happening in Neuroscience?

New Faculty with New Perspectives
Drs. Scherling and Schoenfeld are new faces to the department, both working alongside the neuroscience program to grow it in each of their respective areas. Dr. Scherling brings an eye towards human cognitive neuroscience and neuroimaging while Dr. Schoenfeld works with experimental rats to investigate behavioral neuroscience, connecting changes in the brain to behavior.

These new perspectives in neuroscience research add to Drs McGrew and Ragsdale, who study molecular and behavioral neuroscience in zebrafish and the invertebrate species, c. elegans, and department chairs Drs. Jones and Niedzwiecki, who study health psychology and behavioral ecology, specifically.

Dr. Scherling brings with her neuroimaging data from countless experiments on cognitive decline in aging and medical patients for students to learn to analyze and write codes for, while Dr. Schoenfeld brings with him... brains. Rat brains, specifically, from models of depression and PTSD that students can dissect apart to understand how the brain goes wrong in mental illness.

Brand New Courses
Along with new faces comes brand new courses for our neuroscience majors (and psychology majors too!). Dr. Scherling created a Foundations of Neuroscience course that introduces topics of anatomy of the nervous system, anatomy and physiology of neurons, and broadly how the brain controls a variety of mental processes. Dr. Scherling is also preparing a brand-new Neuroimaging course for the Fall of 2018, where students will learn about modern-day imaging techniques, such as fMRI and PET scans with all of the applications and extensions of these techniques. In addition, students will learn how to code and work with real data to be able to research these very modern and sophisticated techniques in neuroscience.

Society for Neuroscience (SfN) Meeting
Along with 4 students from Dr. McGrew’s summer research program, Drs. Scherling and Schoenfeld took two current Belmont neuroscience majors, Crystal Lemus and Arielle Manabat, to the SfN annual meeting. Both Crystal and Arielle presented their independent summer research at the undergraduate poster session during the Faculty for Undergraduate Neuroscience Social, where they were able to share their research with neuroscience faculty from all over the world. A fantastic night was had by all!

In addition, we attended poster sessions, oral presentations, and keynote addresses over the course of four hectic days to further understand what are hot topics in neuroscience today, what amazing work is being done all around the world, and what ways we can be inspired to add our part with experiments down right back here at Belmont.

Dr. Scherling promoted the neuroscience program throughout the meeting while Dr. Schoenfeld attended workshops on neuroscience teaching and curriculum to bring back home to the program at Belmont.

Neuroscience Events

Brain Awareness Week - March 12-16, 2018
Nu Rho Psi and PC2 are joining forces to engage in brain awareness week this year, a national campaign to provide education about the brain and healthy mental processes.

Throughout the week, various faculty and outside speakers will give talks, lead discussions, advise in brain dissections, and even breakdown mental health in cinema.

In addition, Belmont students, organized by Junior neuroscience major and Nu Rho Psi President, Crystal Lemus, will provide brain education and lead brain dissections at local community centers and elementary schools to teach others about what’s so fascinating about the brain!

Remote Area Medical Service Opportunity - March 17, 2018
Belmont students will head down to Cookeville, TN, to volunteer their time and efforts to help offer free healthcare to those that cannot afford it. Students will help register and guide patients to proper stations, and can even assist with translation services if they speak a second language. All future medical professionals and those with a heart for service are welcome to join!

Dr. Scherling (right) with current Neuroscience majors Crystal Lemus (left) and Arielle Manabat (right) at the SfN Annual Meeting in Washington D.C.!
We would LOVE to hear from you!

What is Psychology doing right now?

At the end of February, we inducted 20 students into Psi Chi, the National Honor's Society in Psychology. The ceremony included addresses by Drs. Schoenfeld and Jones and traditional candle lighting, signifying the intellectual journeys of our new scholars!

As of the writing of this newsletter, 25 students and 3 faculty are attending the Eastern Psychological Association conference in Philadelphia, PA. We attended an opening keynote address the first evening on cognitive practices for studying. For the next two days, we will attend more talks in all disciplines of psychology, present our research during poster sessions, go to workshops to learn how to become better educators and students, and get to sample the best food, history, and culture that Philly has to offer. As long as we can survive the snow!

Visit us on the web at:
belmont.edu/psychology

Our full group at the Eastern Psychological Association Meeting in Philadelphia!

Our new inductees into Psi Chi, the International Honors Society in Psychology!

Psychology faculty at Winter Commencement 2017