Welcome to the second issue of Psychology Matters, the quarterly newsletter of the Department of Psychology. With this issue, I am delighted to announce that our department will welcome three new stars to our faculty in Fall 2016:

- Dr. Lauren McGrath joins our faculty from American University. Her research focuses on cognitive, genetic, and environmental risk factors for developmental disorders with a special emphasis on learning disabilities and associated disorders, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and mood and anxiety disorders. Learn more about Dr. McGrath [here](#)

- Dr. Angela Narayan joins our faculty from University of California San Francisco. Her research investigates how early adversities (e.g., maltreatment, violence exposure, poverty and homelessness, parental psychopathology, war and disaster) in parents' histories and their children's family environments affect psychological health and wellbeing. Learn more about Dr. Narayan [here](#)

- Dr. Leanne ten Brinke joins our faculty from University of California Berkeley. Her research examines whether humans can accurately discriminate friend from foe, how this process unfolds, and the conditions under which individuals are persuaded to place their trust in others. Learn more about Dr. ten Brinke [here](#)

For news and updates, we hope you will stay engaged with our psychology community through this quarterly newsletter and on Facebook. Please [email](#) us if you have stories to share future newsletters.

Alumni Matters

Nathaniel Jungbluth, PhD
Clinical Psychology, Class of 2012

It was a nice surprise to be asked to write a little about my current work for the department newsletter. As a graduate student at DU I often wondered what my career would look like. Would I have to sacrifice some of my interests (clinical work, teaching, research) in service of the others?
Would I work in academic or applied settings? Could I have an impact on bigger systems? Would I achieve some balance between work and life outside of work? With the strong clinical and research training I brought from DU, I was able to seize upon some exciting opportunities that opened up during and after my internship at the University of Washington. By cobbling together a number of different part-time roles, I now find myself enjoying a career that taps all of my interests, and with good work-life balance.

Part of my time is spent as a Research Scientist in the University of Washington's Department of Psychology. I'm part of a team studying supervision in public mental health settings, including a RCT (PI Shannon Dorsey) testing supervision strategies to support Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) being delivered to kids and their families across Washington State.

Another role is to help lead the Washington State TF-CBT and CBT+ Initiative, which trains and supports community providers across the state in using evidence- and research-based interventions for youth affected by trauma, anxiety, depression, and behavior problems. I have also become a trainer and consultant for the National Center for Evidence-Based Practice in Child Welfare, based at the University of Maryland. In these roles I've had the opportunity to train and consult to hundreds of providers.

I enjoy a small role in supervising and teaching psychology and psychiatry fellows at Seattle Children's Hospital, where I completed my own internship and post-doc. And I continue to work directly with kids, families and adults in a small private practice.

While juggling these different roles occasionally feels like a disaster, for the most part it is extremely rewarding, and it allows me plenty of flexibility for quality time and adventures with my wife and 3-year-old son.

**Collaboration Matters**

Sarah Lamer  
3rd year Graduate Student ([Affect/Social](#) Program)

This year marked the 8th annual CU/DU/CSU Social Psychology Research Conference – a collaboration among the University of Colorado at Boulder, Colorado Springs University, and the University of Denver. The conference provides social psychology faculty and students from these three universities a venue to present and discuss research. Since its start almost a decade ago, the conference has evolved into a regular event featuring talks and posters from graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. The event this year – hosted by DU – featured talks touching on topics like vision science, affective processing, and health psychology.

Jessica Keating, a 5th year student working with Dr. Leaf Van Boven at the University of Colorado, spoke about identifying predictors of student drop-out in the first year in her talk titled: "Failing to Fit In: Social Belonging as a Predictor of First-Year College Success".

Danny Lumian, a 4th year student working with Dr. Kateri McRae at the University of Denver spoke about a registered replication is he conducting regarding "Affective Flexibility".

Detre Godinez, a post-doctoral researcher working with Dr. Kateri McRae at the University of Denver, spoke about the neural examination of flexibility in facial responding in her talk titled: "Look, Imitate, and Oppose: Flexibility in facial responding".
Katie Wolsiefer, a 5th year student working with Dr. Irene Blair at the University of Colorado spoke about some ongoing work examining "Patterns and Academic Consequences of Alcohol and Marijuana use Among College Students".

Larissa D'Abreu, a 4th year student working with Dr. Tim Sweeny at the University of Denver reviewed some of her recent work "Unmasking the Process of Face Perception".

Sarah Lamer, a 3rd year student working with Dr. Max Weisbuch at the University of Denver spoke about how "Spatial Cues Distort the Visual Perception of Gender".

Thank you to all of those who supported the event by attending symposia, providing feedback, giving a talk, or presenting a poster. Thank you also to the organizers of this year's event – Sarah Lamer, Danny Lumian, and Elric Elias – for their hard work and planning. We look forward to the continuation of this event in the coming years!

Research Matters: Affective Social Cognitive Science

Tim Sweeney PhD
Professor

Science education has become increasingly important, yet access to inspired scientific training and mentorship remains a privilege available only to the most fortunate of students. I founded the Vision Science Outreach Program to address this gap. Our team of graduate and undergraduate volunteers uses perceptual illusions and hands-on demonstrations to connect local junior-high and high school students with cognitive neuroscience. Since 2013, we have conducted over 20 events for over 2,000 students, most coming from communities around Denver with limited resources.

The first three goals of our program are to spark curiosity, challenge misconceptions, and promote academic achievement. During each event, our team provides a broad overview of vision science to a class or an entire grade of students. These presentations feature "hands-on" demonstrations of a major area of vision science (color perception, face recognition, motion perception, etc.). The purpose is to challenge children to experience what it would be like lose a particular perceptual ability. For example, when powerful sodium lamps flood an auditorium with a single wavelength of light, children temporarily experience what it is like to be totally color-blind. Similarly, children get a sense of what it would be like to have prosopagnosia (i.e., face-blindness), and they briefly experience the difficulty of life with akinetopsia (i.e., motion-blindness). Our team fields the children's questions throughout the program, and when appropriate, we ask the children to guess how and why the illusions work. In this way, we hope to direct each student's inherent curiosity toward scientific inquiry. We make sure that children understand that the illusions are not magic tricks, but instead are by-products of the architecture and development of their brains. Even more shocking is the revelation that if a child enjoyed the presentation, he or she may actually enjoy science! This latter point reinforces the second and third goals of our program, which are to challenge children's preconceived notions of science, and to encourage students to graduate from high school and consider continuing their education.
Our fourth and fifth goals are to promote STEM education and careers among scientifically-underserved groups, and to strengthen DU's connections with the community. We typically collaborate with schools with predominantly Hispanic/Latino or African American students—populations that are underrepresented in physical and biological sciences. We also work closely with service organizations within DU, like CCESL (the Center for Community Engagement and Service Learning), VIP (Volunteers in Partnership), and the CME (Center for Multicultural Excellence), to connect with the community. Our outreach program also allows us to give back to local organizations, like the St. Vrain Valley School District, that directly support our research on autism spectrum disorders and perceptual development.

**Research Matters: Clinical Science**

Howard Markman, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Kayla Knopp  
4th year Graduate student (Clinical Program)  
Lane Ritchie  
3rd year Graduate student (Clinical Program)

Faculty and graduate students in the Center for Marital and Family Studies (CMFS) work to marry the basic science of relationships with the development of effective interventions for couples. The three current graduate students are each pursuing dissertation research that aims to understand the basic processes that determine how romantic relationships succeed (or not). Aleja Parsons' dissertation project explores experiences of racialization among African-American couples. In particular, she is researching how African-American couples communicate about experiences of racism, discrimination, and microaggressions in their daily lives, and how racial ideologies contribute to the success of African-American relationships. She has applied for a Ford Foundation grant to complete this innovative and socially relevant work. Kayla Knopp's study focuses on the role of the "defining the relationship" (DTR) talk in adolescents' romantic relationships. She has applied for an NRSA predoctoral fellowship from NICHD for this research, and she hopes to test whether making intentional decisions about commitment as part of DTR talks may help protect adolescents against risks to their sexual health and wellbeing. Lane Ritchie plans to propose her dissertation project exploring how couples both explicitly and automatically regulate their attention to romantic alternatives, an important component of maintaining commitment to a relationship over time for many couples.

In addition to this research around basic relationship processes, the CMFS is committed to testing and disseminating evidence-based relationship interventions for couples and individuals. For example, Dr. Markman has been working with the government of Singapore to disseminate PREP (The Prevention and Relationship Education Program) to all couples getting married in Singapore. PREP is a research-supported skills-based intervention designed to prevent relationship distress and help couples maintain healthy relationships over time, and the work in Singapore represents the latest endeavor to disseminate PREP internationally (PREP is used in over 12 countries and has served over 1.5 Million people to date). Dr. Galena Rhoades has recently received grant funding for several projects to evaluate the effectiveness of relationship education interventions. She is the Principal Investigator on a study testing whether the Within My Reach relationship education program can help at-risk pregnant women have better personal relationships, lower stress, improved wellbeing, and healthier pregnancies. She is partnering with Denver Health Medical Center to provide these services to pregnant women across Denver, using an RCT design to test the effectiveness of Within My Reach as part of a national evaluation funded by the Administration for Children and Families. In addition, Dr. Scott Stanley and Dr. Rhoades are Co-Investigators on two large-scale projects designed to evaluate programs for low income couples and fathers in Oklahoma and Dr. Stanley continues to write his internationally recognized blog, Sliding vs. Deciding.

Faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates in the CMFS lab family also continue to study relationship processes and intervention effects using existing data sets from several long-term, large-scale longitudinal research projects. These projects include the Relationship Development Study, the Family Stability Project / Family Interaction Study, and the Army Marriage Project. Recent papers from these data have addressed important issues including the impact of PTSD on marriages and children, antecedents and consequences of
infidelity, and how children develop their attitudes about marriage and divorce.

**Research Matters: Developmental Science**

Chris Capistrano  
2nd year Graduate student (Developmental Program)  
Alex Dufford  
1st year Graduate student (Developmental Program)  
Andrew Erhart  
1st year Graduate student (Developmental Program)

Poverty is pervasive problem that affects health of two generations - parents and their children. Low income new parents are more likely than their economically advantaged counterparts to experience chronic stress during pregnancy and postpartum periods. High levels of stress then further increase the new parents’ risks for harsh parenting and postpartum mood disorders, which then negatively influence their infant’s development. The Family and Child Neuroscience Lab aims to better understand whether and how poverty-related stress influences (1) neural and psychological adjustment to parenting among new parents and (2) neural, cognitive and emotional development among their infants. Such understanding may inform intervention programs that help attenuate (or even prevent) the negative outcomes associated with poverty among two generations - parents and infants. As part of our recruitment initiative, our lab has close partnerships with prenatal and postnatal clinics and programs around the Denver metro area regions and Boulder country including Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) clinics, the Prenatal Plus programs, the Nurse-Family Partnerships, and the Denver Health hospital at the University of Colorado Denver. We have currently two on-going related projects to achieve our aims.

First, in the Infant Development, Emotion, and Attachment Project (IDEA), we aim to identify the role of poverty in neural and psychological adjustment to parenting in new mothers and fathers. This three phase study recruits low- and middle-income first-time mothers and fathers. In Phase I, pregnant women and their partner visit our lab in 22 to 28 weeks gestational age. Participants provide biological samples (saliva, blood, hair) to measure hormone levels that are involved in stress regulation and future parenting, as well as respond to questionnaires and interviews about their mood and poverty-related stress. Once a child is born, in Phase II, we visit the new parents' home during the first 6 months postpartum. In this home visit, we focus on assessing the home environment of the family including physical stressors such as noise and crowding, as well as mother (or father)-infant relationships by observing their interactions. Soon after the home visit, in Phase III, both mother and father are invited to the University of Colorado at Boulder for a neuroimaging scan. During this time, we assess parents' neural activation that are associated with parenting and mood regulation.

Some of our early findings of the IDEA project suggest that new mothers living in poverty exhibit reduced neural responses to infant cry sounds in brain regions involved in emotion information processing. This link between poverty and maternal brain response to infant cry was then driven by higher levels of distress reported by mothers living in poverty. We hope the findings can provide scientific evidence for programs to reduce maternal distress and promote positive mother-infant relationships.

Second, in the Study of Healthy Infant Neurodevelopment of Emotion Project (SHINE), we follow up with the families who participated in the IDEA project, and aim to understand how poverty and parenting quality influence infant development at around age 1. The study includes two phases. In Phase I, we visit the family's home again, and conduct cognitive and socioemotional assessments with infants. This home visit also allows us to study mother-infant relationships and collect biological samples to measure infants' stress and emotion regulation. The second part of the study is a neuroimaging scan of the infant. While infants are naturally sleeping, we gather neuroimaging data of infant brain's structure and functional connectivity. We aim to elucidate specific poverty-related risk factors for the developing brain in infancy, which can provide scientific support for the importance of early interventions.
Welcome to Diversity Matters – a collaborative effort between the student-lead Multicultural Interest Group and the Inclusive Excellence Committee. Starting this year, Diversity Matters has become part of Psychology Matters and we are excited about the opportunity to reach a wider audience of students, faculty, staff, and alumni through the quarterly department newsletter.

This issue will highlight department members' experiences at the 2016 DU Diversity Summit. This year's theme was "Beyond Good Intentions: Confronting my Bias to Change Our Community." Psychology graduate students Kerry Gagnon, Kayla Knopp, Lane Ritchie, and Allison Stiles held a workshop entitled "Change from Within: Becoming Aware of Our Internal Biases." The workshop illuminated implicit biases we all hold and sparked a conversation about awareness of biases and their consequences. Workshop participants took an Implicit Associations Test – a computer-administered test that assesses implicit preferences for one group of people over another. Results were surprising to many participants – most were surprised to learn that they held implicit biases that run counter to their conscious values and felt compelled to reevaluate their beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. Importantly, many participants were excited to take what learned to their families and workplaces.

Interdisciplinary Research Incubator for the Study of (In)Equality (IRISE) postdoctoral fellows María Islas-López, Dian Squire, and Jennifer Ewa held a workshop entitled "I'm not Racist, but..: Exploring the Implicit Bias in DU's Campus." Prior to the Diversity Summit, the postdoctoral fellows asked anonymous questions regarding concept related to diversity (e.g., affirmative action, immigration) throughout the DU community. During the workshop, participants discussed these responses and engaged in open discussions regarding race, inequality, and social justice – facilitating an exploration of how perceptions of these issues within campus may differ from the reality of what some students may experience.

We asked psychology students and postdocs who presented at the summit to learn more about their experiences at the workshop. Overwhelmingly, they felt that the conversations they had at the summit inspired them to continue focusing on inclusive excellence in their work and personal lives. Here are the highlights of what they had to say: "Attending the summit, I learn something new every year. It is a great place to renew my commitment for action and become inspired for my own work." "Workshop context provides a powerful avenue for influencing change – participants were able to recognize own biases without feeling blamed." "The summit provides an opportunity to connect with individuals across different departments and build collaborations." "There is great interest in the DU community to value and engage the diverse experiences of its members and the larger community".

Presenters had the following advice for students who are considering presenting at the summit in the future: Interactive content is key in breaking down communication barriers. Consider your audience – the workshops are composed of people who typically don't have a background in psychology. Bring your inquiring mind and expect to challenge yourself and others!

We hope this article inspired you to think of ways in which you can contribute to inclusive excellence and become engaged in the DU Diversity Summit 2017!
Major Matters

Autumn Moss
BS Psychology Major with concentration Cognitive Neuroscience, class of 2016

It’s hard to put into words why I’m so drawn to psychology. All I know for sure is that the psychology department has helped grow my knowledge and passion for the study of psychology. From the vast range of classes, to the opportunities for students to be involved in research, and to the awesome mentors provided to us.

After volunteering as a research assistant in the Social Context and Development Lab run by Associate Professor Julia Dmitrieva, I discovered an appetite for helping those who were victims to any sort of violence. It was eye-opening seeing the consequences when mental health wasn't easily accessible. I learned about the prevalence of dating violence in Professor Shrira's Psychology of Relationships class, as we discussed domestic violence, the consequences, and the perpetrators. Plus, with the guidance of my advisors, Drs. Kateri McRae and Pamela Miller, I was able to figure out a feasible path to my future.

The Psychology Department at the University of Denver has had such a vital role in helping me narrow down what I want to pursue and allowing me to further my academic endeavors, and I am so proud to say that I have been a part of such a promising department. Not everyone can answer what they want to do when they grow up, but with my time at DU, I can say that I can and will make an impact on those who have survived domestic and sexual violence.

Teaching Matters

Pamela Miller, PhD
Professor

There are often moments when students or colleagues ask that one question that requires some serious thinking. Perhaps the question points out a bias or a situation that simply cannot be explained by current research. These moments are golden—they provide opportunities for learning, exploring, and questioning. These moments lead to unexpected discussions and an incredible chance for learning serving to remind us that ‘teachers are learners, too.’ In order to continue to be successful, professors must continue to grow in pedagogy, grow in knowledge, and grow in their ability to relate to today’s college student.

One of the strategic initiatives included in DU IMPACT 2025 is Enhancing and Expanding our Learning Environment. As such, faculty members are challenged to reconsider teaching practices, to create a learning space that is inclusive and innovative, and to provide transformative educational experiences.

At DU, we are fortunate to have a multitude of opportunities for teachers to be learners. As one example, the Center for Multicultural Excellence organizes a truly impressive event—the DU Diversity Summit. The 2016 summit, held in late January, was themed "Beyond Good Intentions: Confronting My Bias to Change Our Community". It offered an extraordinary opportunity for faculty, students, and staff to start important and difficult conversations regarding inclusive excellence both in and out of the classroom. Importantly, it presented an opportunity for individuals to examine and question their own beliefs and behaviors regarding explicit and implicit biases. In short, it offered an opportunity for learning and change. If you would like to see some of the exciting events that occurred, watch here.

A second annual opportunity for faculty members to become learners is during Teaching and Learning Week. Sponsored by the Office of Teaching and Learning, the 2016 event "Teaching for Impact: Conversations About Learning" was filled with guest speakers, panel discussion sessions, workshops, and a technology fair. These events offered a time for reflection and sharing of teaching techniques that may or may not be working
in the classroom.

Events like these often result in a bit of discomfort or even confusion as teachers continue to learn and grow. However, exposure to new questions and striving to find answers to difficult questions translates into intellectual growth. This is an expectation I have for my students, and one I have for myself. And so I challenge my students and colleagues: keep asking those difficult questions so we all continue to learn together.