A Farewell
Mary Beth Kenkel, Ph.D., Dean, College of Psychology and Liberal Arts

And now it’s time to say goodbye ... after 17 years as dean and professor of Florida Tech’s College of Psychology and Liberal Arts (CoPLA), I will be retiring at the end of June 2018. It has been a good ride—I think we have accomplished a good deal within the college and in the university and I feel confident that CoPLA’s administrators and faculty will excellently carry on and advance our academic programs, research and service initiatives.

Being dean has been an enriching, professionally challenging and satisfying job and has afforded me the opportunity to do what I am most passionate about—enhancing individual lives and the broader community through educational programs, research and services. I have always considered myself a “builder” and I am happiest when creating something new that will make the world a better place. I was fortunate to have many like-minded faculty and administrators to work with to build new academic and service programs, to expand our research and scholarly contributions, to better engage our local community and to more directly address issues confronting our society. We also committed ourselves to showing others in this technological institution how our disciplines in psychology, behavior analysis, humanities and communication enrich the education of students in all fields and better prepare them for success in their careers and lives.

As a result of new initiatives, student enrollment in our college grew from approximately 200 to 1,100 students, and we now provide academic programs that address the interests and needs of a greater array of students, including international students, veterans, traditional on-campus students, home-bound students and working professionals. We have a full “portfolio” of programs within CoPLA, extending from associate degrees to doctoral degrees, and in a variety of delivery formats, including full time on campus, weekend, hybrid and fully online.

We also have increased and expanded our research programs. Faculty with great passion for research have engaged and mentored students in applied research, yielding results that can be used to improve the functioning of individuals, organizations or society and engendering a lifelong appreciation and enthusiasm for research. And through their publications and presentations, faculty bring attention to Florida Tech and the impressive body of research being done by CoPLA faculty.

Occasionally, I have a person ask me (or at least, wonder) “what does a dean do?” My response is that a dean paints an inspiring vision for the college, formulates paths to get there, helps others see their potential roles in accomplishing that vision and their professional goals incorporated within that vision, and then encourages and assists all to strive toward that vision. So a dean is dreamer, promoter, puzzle maker, road paver, enforcer, cheerleader, mentor, protector of nascent ideas, problem-solver, consultant, supporter. I have enjoyed all of these roles, and I am certain the next dean will continue and expand upon them.

So what now? Why leave when I am having such a good time? You can partially blame Florida Tech for that. While here, I have been surrounded by students and faculty who come from all over the world and embody many different and interesting cultures. Being in this mix has made me realize how much more I want to learn about the history, culture and peoples of the world. And the events of today both here and abroad show how much more needs to be done to make the world a better, inclusive and more peaceful place. While my husband and I started to do more international travel several years ago, it seems on those trips, we just about get our bearings when it is time to leave. So we are looking forward to more extended stays in places around the globe so we can more fully engage in discovery and learning. Then we hope to find new ways to use that knowledge and our skills to “do good in the world.” Looking forward to this next life phase! Thanks for the opportunity to serve as dean.
In the 21st century, the forces of the global economy, interdependent technology and borderless innovation are converging to redefine skills and competencies required of our current and future workforce. Productive and successful workers are increasingly expected to be not only highly educated and technologically capable, but also skillful and effective in collaborating across borders and with people with highly diverse backgrounds. Educational institutions, such as Florida Institute of Technology, that offer both technologically advanced and culturally rich and diverse educational opportunities to its students are uniquely positioned to develop the global citizens of tomorrow.

As a commitment to developing such global citizens and further fostering cultural diversity on the campus, Florida Institute of Technology now offers a Certificate in Cross-Cultural Competence. The goal of this non-credit program is to prepare students to enter the global workforce as informed and culturally competent citizens. This certificate is available to all students. Through participation in this program, students experience the global character of FIT—a truly international university, and enhance their résumé with a variety of academic, co-curricular and international activities.

Students in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology (I/O) program, along with Dr. Rich Griffith and the I/O program’s affiliated Institute for Cross Cultural Management (ICCM) have developed and are currently conducting a Cross-Cultural Competence (3C) Training Workshop as part of the certificate program. Mina Milosevic, Xiaowen Chen, Jesse Caylor and Joshua Bush have been leading the two-year effort to develop and facilitate this workshop.

The 3C workshop is designed to engage students in a simulated cross-cultural experience and then, through a series of interactive activities, guide the students as they reflect on how they felt, what they thought and how they behaved during the cross-cultural game. Through several interactive activities, students gradually proceed from enhanced self-awareness to understanding different perspectives. Essential 3C tools and strategies are introduced through exercises and poignant personal examples, encouraging students to begin to develop their own 3C toolkit.

The 3C workshop does not focus on teaching cultural knowledge that applies to specific cultures; but rather, the workshop emphasizes increasing self-awareness, opening students to broad cultural experiences and preparing them for cultural interactions that they are certain to encounter during their time at Florida Tech and beyond.

Envisioned as a starting point on the journey to cross-cultural competence, the workshop is a fun way to experience, think and talk about culture. Here is what students are saying about it:

“I really enjoyed the culture workshop, it gave a great way to immerse yourself into a different culture and experience how others feel when dropped into a different setting and how they would react.”

“The game we played at first really helped me to understand that there will always be a culture barrier, but it is possible to overcome and work with people that might not even speak your language.”

“I liked how they took the stress away from cross-cultural experiences. I believe I will be more comfortable with them in the future.”
The Institute for Cross Cultural Management (ICCM) at Florida Institute of Technology has successfully hosted the 3rd Cross Cultural Management Summit at Caribe Royale in Orlando, March 22–24, 2018. The theme of this year’s summit was “Going Beyond Global” that discusses cross-cultural challenges not only in business and management but also in potential space activities.

The 2018 Cross Cultural Management Summit kicked off with a keynote speech on March 22 by former NASA Astronaut Captain Winston Scott, who shared his experiences dealing with various challenges from different cultures during his education, military career and space career. After the keynote, ICCM presented the Trailblazer Award to Buzz Aldrin in recognition of his pioneering efforts in exploring and challenging cross-cultural boundaries beyond human imagination.

On the second day of the summit (March 23), Dr. McCay, president of Florida Tech, gave the opening remarks. He welcomed the audience to the event and shared his experiences of traveling around the world and dealing with people from different cultures. Following the opening remarks, we had our first session on Culture and Well-being. Sonya Kaleel, senior consultant from Aperian Global, shared insights on the stress factors that can impact the expatriate adjustment cycle and the ways to mitigate them from an individual and organizational level. Dr. Richard Griffith, executive director of ICCM, discussed stress and anxiety expatriates face when returning home. He also shared evidence-based best practices to reduce these challenges before, during and after global assignments. We concluded this session with a cultural activity where attendees worked on innovation-related issues different culture might encounter in a potential Mars mission.

On the morning of the third day (March 24), our scientist-practitioner exhibition provided an exciting opportunity for academics to present their recent cross-cultural research and for practitioners and agencies to showcase their relevant products and service. Our attendees also took this opportunity to network and communicate ideas in the area of cross-cultural management. Following this exhibition, we had our case analysis activity where our attendees worked in small groups to discuss cross-cultural issues encountered on the mission to Mars while learning about different cultures and working alongside colleagues from a variety of disciplines.

Our third session on March 24 focused on Culture and Problem Solving. Carolyn Fennel, senior director of Public Affairs and Community Relations from Greater Orlando Aviation Authority, shared the vision of a world-class airport that incorporates culture in its vision, mission and design concept; Dr. Michele Gelfand, professor from the University of Maryland, discussed her research on social norms and the patterns of difference across nations, states, organizations and social classes. The summit concluded with closing remarks given by Dr. Jill Tarter, Bernard M. Oliver Chair for SETI Research. She shared her experiences and visions for human race take a cosmic perspective that goes beyond global to search for extraterrestrial intelligence.

The summit was received as inspiring and interactive. The audience enjoyed the presentations from our speakers with different backgrounds, and the opportunities to interact and network with others at the summit. The closing remarks by Dr. Jill Tarter appeared in a large number of news outlets including USA Today, Daily Mail, Florida Today, International Business Times, etc.
Research Applications in Behavioral Health: A Focus on Tobacco Control

Vida L. Tyc, Ph.D., Professor, Clinical Psychology

Integrated behavioral health care is a model of patient care that involves primary care providers and behavioral clinicians working together with patients and families to address their physical and mental health care needs. This emerging field has the potential to improve health outcomes and health care delivery for adult and pediatric patients seen in health care settings. Many patients who present in medical offices and clinics with physical problems are affected by stress, have difficulty engaging in healthy lifestyles, and/or have substance use or mental health problems. Integrated behavioral health combines medical and behavioral health services to more fully address the spectrum of physical and mental health problems that patients bring to primary and specialty care and psychologists play a significant role in the delivery of these services in behavioral health systems.

Tobacco control initiatives are a major focus in behavioral health care. Tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure (SHSe) are serious health hazards for children, particularly those who are medically compromised and vulnerable to respiratory and cardiopulmonary complications. Dr. Vida Tyc and doctoral psychology students, Emily Crochet and Lauren Dilullo, recently examined attitudes about SHSe and behavioral practices to avoid SHSe in the home, car, and social settings in non-smoking children, 10–18 years, being treated for cancer and sickle cell disease. Study findings demonstrated that children with cancer and sickle cell disease similarly reported a general awareness of their health risks associated with SHSe and the importance of engaging in behaviors to reduce those risks. Despite this knowledge, a significant proportion of children with cancer and sickle cell disease reported permissive attitudes toward smoking in the home and car, as long as the child/teen was not present, thereby ignoring the lingering health effects of residual tobacco smoke in these closed environments. Additionally, children more frequently engaged in non-verbal risk-reduction behaviors (i.e., leaving the room with a smoker) than directive verbal behaviors (i.e., discussing risks/concerns, asking a person to stop smoking) to protect themselves from SHSe. Results suggest that increasing children’s awareness of SHSe-related health risks alone may not be sufficient to promote risk reduction behaviors among children who are vulnerable to SHSe-related health problems. Interventions that encourage at-risk youth to take a more proactive and assertive stance in reducing their SHSe are warranted. Results from this study were presented at the 2nd Annual Brevard/Indian River/Central Chapters of the Florida Psychological Association Regional Conference held in Melbourne in October 2017 and will be presented at the national Society of Pediatric Psychology Conference in Orlando in April 2018. This study is just one example of work being conducted in the area of integrated behavioral health at FIT. This semester, a new graduate course is being offered by Dr. Tyc, entitled Supervised Research in Integrated Behavioral Health. This course is intended to provide students with the necessary skills to become critical consumers of research in behavioral health care settings. Students will also have the opportunity to develop research projects with a health promotion and behavioral health focus. In addition to tobacco control, pediatric sleep, pain management and information technology addiction are just a few of the content areas students have elected to address.

Veterans Evaluation Team (VET) at Florida Institute of Technology

Alyssa Johnson, M.S. and Megan Hart, M.S., Clinical Psychology Students

The Veterans Evaluation Team (VET) at Florida Institute of Technology began in 2016 as a part of the Center for Combat Veteran Resiliency. The team provides an opportunity for Clinical Psychology Psy.D. students to hone their clinical assessment skills while working with veterans in our local community. The team’s purpose is to provide veterans with a thorough and comprehensive psychological evaluation regarding their psychological functioning and related eligibility for service-connected benefits. The veterans served are extensively interviewed regarding their military history, social functioning, occupational functioning, and symptoms of PTSD and other psychological disorders that may have a significant negative impact on these areas of life. The veterans are also given numerous psychological inventories which provide the evaluators with information regarding the veteran's current psychological functioning. Together with the veteran's history, the VET members develop a diagnosis that fits with the psychological concerns and history of each client. The diagnoses and detailed history of the client allows the VET members to provide a thorough list of recommendations for treatment. These recommendations may include individual therapy to address personal traumas and symptoms; group therapy where veterans are able to gain perspective and insight while learning from others who have had similar experiences; consultation with a psychiatrist to obtain psychotropic medications which may reduce symptom intensity, frequency, and duration; and other more personalized recommendations relating to physical health, as well as social and occupational matters. Many times, the reports provided by the VET team are used to aid the veteran in gaining well-deserved benefits for service-connected disabilities.

The students involved on this team are passionate about working with this very worthy population and providing the evaluations to assist our veterans in obtaining necessary aid and mental health care. The compassion and quality work put into the evaluations are the VET's way of giving back to well-deserving veterans in our community. This advanced practicum team is supported and supervised by Dr. Richard T. Elmore Jr. He served as a Captain in the Army (1968–71). His assignments include serving as a Section Commander within the Combat Assault Helicopter Company, 82nd Aviation BN, 82nd Airborne Division at Ft. Bragg, NC. Under his trusted guidance and with his unique understanding of the veterans’ needs, clinical students learn to refine their understanding of combat-related PTSD and other psychological disorders that veterans experience as a result of military service to our country.
An Integrated Approach to Child Advocacy at Florida Institute of Technology

Demara B. Bennett, Psy.D., Licensed Psychologist; Director of the Family Learning Program and Assistant Professor, Clinical Psychology

The Maasai people of Kenya use the greeting “Kasserian Ingera?” translated into English as “And how are the children?,” reflecting the cultural value placed on their children’s well-being. Many educators, philosophers, child welfare workers and policy makers have cited this quote, asking “And how are the children?” to emphasize the need to prioritize children more broadly within American society. Failure to protect children from maltreatment results in negative individual, multigenerational and societal outcomes, and research reflects the significant relationship between trauma associated with adverse childhood experiences and subsequent mental health disorders, physical conditions and rates of medical and mental health service utilization (Norman et al., 2012).

Child advocacy studies and child abuse evaluation and treatment services are expanding and intersecting areas of emphasis at Florida Institute of Technology. This is most evident in overlapping opportunities between the child advocacy courses and the Family Learning Program (FLP). Dr. Demara (Mari) Bennett, director of the Family Learning Program, also teaches both child advocacy courses, Introduction to Child Advocacy and Critical Issues in Child Advocacy, two of the three required courses within the undergraduate Child Advocacy Studies (CAST) certificate. Additionally, she redeveloped and teaches the online Introduction to Child Advocacy course. Through these courses, students examine the historical trajectory of child protection; types of maltreatment; individual, familial and societal risk factors; prevention and treatment; comparative perspectives; controversial topics; the Dependency system; legal frameworks including investigations and criminal and dependency proceedings; responses to child maltreatment; related skills and careers; and future directions. As an expert member serving on the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) Center for Child Policy Child Maltreatment Reporting Laws Committee (http://centerforchildpolicy.org/experts.html), Dr. Bennett maintains current knowledge about related statutes, challenges, and policies and incorporates current mandated reporting material into the courses. The child advocacy courses prepare students for graduate training or professional child advocacy careers, and several students have also chosen to intern or volunteer with the Family Learning Program.

The Family Learning Program (FLP) is dedicated to providing best practice psychological services to improve the lives of children, adolescents and families affected by child maltreatment. FLP’s vision is to reduce the prevalence of child maltreatment in Brevard County through implementation of four core values: community awareness, intervention, collaboration and prevention (https://t.fit.edu/flp). FLP’s flagship treatment team, the Sexual Abuse Treatment Program (SATP), has been located at Florida Tech for 27 years, since its inception in 1991. As one of only 14 Department of Health-sponsored Sexual Abuse Treatment Programs in the State of Florida, the FLP SATP provides specialized and ongoing training for its clinical psychology therapists and staff and utilizes Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and other evidence-based and evidence-supported treatments implemented within a family systems treatment model. The FLP Sexual Abuse Treatment Program is entirely supported by federal and state grants, and services are provided at no cost to victims and families. In 2014, Dr. Bennett developed the FLP Dependency Evaluation Team (DET), an advanced, specialized practicum for clinical psychology trainees. Dependency evaluations are court-involved evaluations provided when a child has been removed from a parent/caregiver’s care due to verified child maltreatment (neglect and/or abuse). Dependency and Pre-Adoptive evaluations are requested by involved agencies to determine the needs of the child and/or concerns and relative strengths and weaknesses of the parent/caregiver to assist in determining appropriate recommendations and whether the child will be able to be returned to the parent/caregiver while maintaining the child’s safety.

Treatment for maltreated children and their families is often provided in a fragmented manner, resulting in limited coordination of care and challenges for behavioral health providers as they attempt to assist child welfare agencies and the court system in determining recommendations for treatment services, visitation, placement, risk management and safety planning. To provide a more coordinated system of treatment, Dr. Bennett most recently developed the Integrated Child and Family Trauma Program (ICFTP), which will serve as an innovative, model program and provides one-stop, specialized evaluation and treatment services for children and families at risk for maltreatment or with verified histories of maltreatment in collaboration with child welfare agencies, the court and other community partners.

Through the introduction of this third treatment team, Family Learning Program services now include evaluation, sexual abuse treatment and treatment for any type of child maltreatment with an emphasis on diagnostic clarification within a trauma framework, addressing risk and safety, evidence-based interventions within a family systems model, and active collaboration with community partners. The intersection of child advocacy courses and trauma treatment at FIT enhances each of the respective components. Consider Kaci Garcia, M.S. and Nicole Murray, M.S., clinical Psy.D. students and incoming FLP associate directors who both previously sat in child advocacy courses as undergraduate students not so long ago. Their professional development has been rewarding to support and observe, and they are clear examples of the relevance and impact of the child advocacy initiative at Florida Institute of Technology. And how are the children? Better, and that’s a good place to start.

The School of Psychology’s Diversity Committee has been making an impact in 2018

Amy Cuccuro, Clinical Psychology Doctoral Student

The Diversity Committee’s main goal has always been to encourage a climate of appreciation and respect for human equality within the School of Psychology, the FIT campus and the community at large. This year, they hoped to host events that could serve as a place for students and faculty to engage in insightful discussion about relevant and global issues in diversity. As part of their goal to enhance appreciation and respect for all individuals, the committee has organized multiple events to educate and widen the perspectives of others. In January, the committee participated in FIT’s International Festival, which is held annually at the Panther Plaza. They sponsored a booth that showcased a variety of board games and play-related activities from around the world. The games included board games from India, Egypt, Australia, Turkey, Greece and more. Indeed, a very diverse spread! The committee members enjoyed playing games and discussing their origins and traditions with our visitors.

On Feb. 23, the committee presented the School of Psychology’s Diversity Out Loud colloquium, which they host once each semester. This semester’s event, coined “Speaking of Faith: Perspectives on Psychological Well-being,” focused on spiritual diversity. Particularly, they hoped to broaden the scope through which listeners understood religion and how different religions conceptualized common aspects of the human experience, such as suffering, loss and compassion. The speakers—Father Bob Bruckart, Phra Sirithacho and Chase Hansal—presented viewpoints from tenets of their religious affiliations, which are Christianity, Buddhism and Atheism, respectively. They also engaged in thoughtful conversation with each other and the audience. These events were well received by the students and faculty alike. The events have also encouraged students to participate in the type of dialogue that is necessary to create impactful societal changes.

The Diversity Committee faculty members alongside the speakers at the Spring Diversity Out Loud Colloquium. (From left: Dr. Maria Lavooy, Dr. Victoria Follette, Dr. Radhika Krishnamurthy, Chase Hansel, Phra Sirithacho (Monk Tee), Fr. Bob Bruckart, Dr. Katrina Merlini, Dr. Frank Webbe)

2018–19 Clinical Psychology Psy.D. Internship Placements

Talita Abbott—Milton Hershey School, Hershey, PA
Taylor Anderson—Community Reach Center, Commerce City, CO
Jared Barrow—VA Eastern Kansas Healthcare System, Leavenworth, KS
Emily Crochet—Wright State University – Ellis Institute, Dayton, OH
Lauren DiLullo—University of Florida Health Science Center, Gainesville, FL
Gabriela Gonzalez—VA Caribbean Healthcare System, San Juan, PR
Alicia Kissinger-Knox—University of Florida Health Sciences Center, Gainesville, FL
Tracy Masi—Boise VA Medical Center, Boise, ID
Victoria McGrady—Wichita Collaborative Psychology, Wichita, KS
Caitlin O’Brien—Florida State Hospital, Chattahoochee, FL
Miranda Spain—Madigan Army Medical Center, Tacoma, WA
Lisa Stewart—James A. Haley Veterans Hospital, Tampa, FL
Justine Swanson—VA Boston Healthcare System, Boston, MA
Damla Til Ogut—California Psychology Internship Consortium, Fresno, CA
Tatiana Vallejo-Luces—Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center, Tuscaloosa, AL
Keara Washington—Malcolm Grow Medical Clinic and Surgery Center (USAF), Joint Base Andrews, MD
Cockroaches in the Classroom: Proctor and Jones Awarded Teaching Grant

Darby Proctor, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Psychology

Students learn better when they can engage in active learning (doing things) as compared to passive learning, like reading a book (see for example the Oxford Handbook of Undergraduate Psychology Education). As an instructor, I try to incorporate active learning experiences in my classroom whenever possible. Recently, this effort has taken me to an unexpected tool for hands-on learning, the discoid cockroach (Blaberus discoidalis).

Last spring, I taught our Physiological Psychology class for the first time and struggled to create engaging activities to illustrate the principles of neurophysiology. Fortunately, a company called Backyard Brains had a solution. They sell neuroscience equipment that allows you to see and record live action potentials, manipulate neurons using electrical stimulation and conduct simple experiments ... with cockroaches. So, naturally, I bought a cockroach colony and some equipment.

The roach colony in my office stimulated much conversation with my colleagues, some of it revolving around people threatening to step on them if they escaped. During one such conversation, Marshall Jones and I stumbled upon an idea to use the roaches more broadly in our undergraduate curriculum, particularly in courses like Comparative Animal Cognition and Animal Learning and Behavior. We thought this would add more active learning experiences and thereby increase student learning outcomes.

Traditionally, psychology undergrads worked with pigeon or rat labs if they desired hands-on experience. However, those types of labs have fallen out of favor in the U.S. due to the expense of maintaining the animals as well as ethical concerns about using vertebrates for teaching purposes. Roaches are much less expensive than vertebrates, and there are fewer ethical issues since most people would not hesitate to step on one. Knowing that students learn better with lab experiences, Marshall and I decided that if we could replicate some classic psychology experiments using roaches we might be able to get other universities to adopt this model.

In December 2017 the Association for Psychological Science awarded us a teaching grant to test out using roaches in the classroom. We are going to replicate several experiments demonstrating phenomena like classical and operant conditioning and post the plans and materials for those experiments online. We believe that this could encourage other universities to do the same.

The Psychology Honors Program in la Ville Sophistiquée

William Gabrenya, Ph.D., Associate Professor, School of Psychology

Sometimes (rarely), I can imagine it is in a café on the Paris Left Bank that my Honors Seminar is discussing some shocking new psychological discovery—1935, Sartre and de Beauvoir admiring the brilliance of our debate from one table over. Alas, it is nonetheless a delightful experience, here at the Sun Shoppe in la ville sophistiquée downtown Melbourne, to share ideas with an enthusiastic group of incipient psychologists over what is, I expect, superior coffee. The Psychology Honors Program was initiated in 2006 and now about 10 students in any given semester are participating in seminars and working on their Honors Theses. The seminar, sans Sartre or his lover, provides honors students the experience of drilling down into research reports not unlike many of them will soon confront in doctoral research programs. The Honors Thesis is essentially a master’s thesis in all ways excepting the hardcover binding and Graduate School rules—and often of comparable quality. Our best students join the Honors Program because they really do like research and most hope to earn postgraduate degrees in research-oriented areas of psychology or related disciplines. For faculty, it is a pleasure indeed to interact closely with students who enjoy research and have little fear of statistics; and for honors students, finding like-minded peers facilitates expressing their interests in a manner unlikely to be afforded in regular classes. Please take a look at http://cpla.fit.edu/psych/ugrad/honors-thesis.php to appreciate the diversity of topics that our honors students have taken up in their thesis research.

The School of Psychology is at present the only department at Florida Tech offering an honors program. The department has devoted considerable resources to support the program, including faculty staffing for the seminars and a director position. The faculty, in turn, have been willing to supervise theses, 26 so far with 10 currently in progress, on top of their normal work load to make it all possible. A few years ago, the undergrad program formed a committee to administer the program, comprised of myself as director and three young faculty who have been heavily invested in undergrad teaching and advising, Drs. Travis Conradt, Vanessa Edkins and Darby Proctor. After passing on a proposal led by Psychology to initiate a university-wide honors program back in 2005, the university is once again exploring this concept using the Psychology Honors Program as a preliminary model. Ah, Simon de Beauvoir ...
Eye Opening Demonstrations in Sensation and Perception

Katrina Ellis, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Psychology

Ever wonder why the stars twinkle at night? Why is the sky blue? Is your red the same as my red? How do 3-D movies work? On the first day of my Sensation and Perception course, I warn my students that there is no going back, and that they will learn things in this course that will change how they perceive the world forever. Sensation and Perception is a class on the five senses from a neurological perspective. We first discuss the connection and differences between the world and our perception of reality. By using visual illusions, I demonstrate that our perceptual worlds are different from the physical world.

I use demonstrations such as illusions to support the abstract concepts and theories that are typically difficult for students to digest. Examples of demonstrations include: 3-D glasses and VR goggles to demonstrate how we perceive depth through binocular disparity (i.e., processing of information gathered from both eyes), perceptual priming and ambiguous figures (i.e., figures that can be interpreted in multiple ways like the face- vase) to demonstrate how our visual systems make sense of imperfect information, and a box full of mystery items to demonstrate haptic (or touch) perception.

Some demonstrations have students in the participant role such as the mapping of cones of confusion (i.e., errors in finding the location of a sound) using a blindfold and classmates tapping their pencils. Other demonstrations have students in the experimenter role like when we map the size of touch receptive fields to demonstrate touch sensitivity. Still further demonstrations help me to model more abstract concepts such as the path of stimuli information from the eyes through the brain. Though I don’t use it often, the mind reading trick is my favorite to demonstrate some basic research methods concepts. First, I ask students for suggestions on topics to write on slips of paper to put in a hat. A student volunteer will draw a random topic from the hat and show it to the rest of the class while I am not looking. After, successfully reading the minds of the students, I ask them how they think I was able to read their mind. Students create hypotheses, methods of testing these hypotheses and experience the scientific method firsthand. This demonstration affords an introduction to the terminology and concepts in research methods and design.

Every now and then, I get an email from a past student commenting on the demonstrations from Sensation and Perception. It seems these demonstrations not only help them to understand but to remember after the semester ends. The applications of perceptual research are endless from assisting people with impaired senses to artificial intelligence to designing safer technology. By engaging students in these difficult topics through demonstrations, students can experience the subject in a way that aids in retention to fuel future design and use of intuitive technology.

The Scott Center for Autism Organizes Evening of Hope 2018

Courtenay Porter, Director of External Relations, The Scott Center for Autism Treatment

On Feb. 17, 2018, The Scott Center for Autism Treatment celebrated 10 years of successful fundraising and community support by raising $134,000 with An Evening of Hope X. Hosted by Mike and Rashmi Shah on their stunning Merritt Island estate, the night was dedicated to Ed and Cheryl Scott, whose vision and generous gift led to the founding of The Scott Center for Autism Treatment.

During the event, Ed Scott took to the stage to share the story of his son, Reece, who was diagnosed with autism in the 1990s. At the time of his diagnosis, there was little information and limited services for children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. But through the support of his parents, teachers and therapists, Reece overcame many challenges. He eventually graduated from the University of Oxford in England with a master’s degree in modern Japanese studies and now is CEO of his own gaming business in Japan. This story of challenge and triumph is what inspired the Scotts to provide generous funding for the creation of The Scott Center in 2009.

While much of the night was spent honoring the past, An Evening of Hope also had an eye on the future. The Scott Center, in conjunction with Florida Tech's Virtual Reality Lab, unveiled the new technology that will expand access to autism treatment. Led by The Scott Center's Boyd Mark and the Virtual Reality Lab's Martin Gallagher, guests had an extraordinary opportunity to experience a fully immersive, 360-degree tour of the center by using the Oculus Rift. In addition to visiting the center virtually, guests also experienced a livestream of the event, allowing them to see firsthand how this technology will be used in treating children diagnosed with ASD.

Kemp's Jewelers in Indialantic once again generously donated a Rolex Oyster Perpetual GMT-MASTER II, which was raffled off as a key component of The Scott Center's fundraising efforts. Dee Dee Sheffield won the timepiece, valued at $8,450, at the raffle drawing on Feb. 24. Guests at An Evening of Hope enjoyed food by Taste of India and Green Turtle Market and danced to music by Wonderama.
Does Providing Advance Notice Matter?

Adam Brewer, Ph.D., BCBA-D, Assistant Professor, Hybrid Master’s Program in Professional Behavior Analysis

A socially significant problem that negatively impacts the quality of life for individuals with autism is that they often struggle when transitioning from one daily activity to the next (e.g., math-to-recess). These transitions are a trigger for emotional and behavioral dysfunction (e.g., crying, whining and aggression) that disrupts performance on educational tasks. Parents and caregivers report that their child’s transition difficulties are a major source of concern and stress. To prevent transition-related problem behavior in children with autism, behavioral therapists often provide advance notice usually in the form of verbal warnings or pictorial activity schedules. However, applied researchers (most notably current FIT on-campus faculty members Drs. David Wilder and Catherine Nicholson) have offered evidence that providing advance notice may be ineffective, and in some cases, may make the problem worse. During the first year in the Hybrid Program in Professional Behavior Analysis, our team (composed of basic and applied researchers) carefully examined the literature on this topic and proposed that these seemingly conflicting reports between applied research and practice were both correct. That is, the effectiveness of advance notice for treating transition-related problem behavior may depend on the type of transition. Advance notice appears to be effective only when the timing and/or some aspect of the transition are unpredictable (e.g., exposure to a novel activity that is not a part of a daily routine) as opposed to when the transition is predictable (e.g., repeating the same daily routine). The focus of our programmatic line of research entails scientifically testing the conditions that advance notice will or will not be effective for treating transition-related problem behavior.

To shape the next generation of science-informed practitioners that are highly skilled critical thinkers, our graduate students in the hybrid program complete capstone projects. These projects are tailored to experimentally evaluating their own clinical experiences using advance notice. For instance, in a recently published capstone (Vasquez, Brewer, Leon, & Vasquez, 2017), one student who was co-mentored with the talented Dr. Yanerys Leon found that advance notice is effective at reducing problem behavior triggered by a task interruption. Not only did the student successfully treat the client, but she also made an important impact in the applied literature. Her study adds to our knowledge of when advance notice is likely to be effective. The broader impact of disseminating this student’s capstone is that practitioners across the world will be able benefit and use this knowledge to inform treatment decisions with their clients. I am currently collaborating with Dr. Leon and other extraordinary hybrid faculty members such as Drs. Christopher Krebs and Marilin Colon to further understand under what conditions will advance notice be effective for decreasing transition-related problem behavior in individuals with autism.

Understanding the effects of advance notice may have applications beyond autism practice. Related to the field of behavioral gerontology, Dr. Celeste Harvey has joined our team to investigate whether providing advance notice increases compliance with essential medical care routines. In the area of organizational behavior management, our students are exploring innovative applications of advance notice in the workplace to reduce stress and anxiety related to job uncertainty with Drs. Nicole Gravina and Byron Wine.

In sum, more applied research is needed to understand the benefits and potential problems associated with providing advance notice across a variety of practices.

Kudos

Faculty and Student Publications


Borden, K. A. & Kenkel, M. B. (2017, August). Facilitating faculty scholarly activity. In L. Mangione (Chair), Mentoring across the developmental spectrum in the context of changing demographics. Symposium conducted at the APA Annual Convention, Washington, DC.


Faculty Honors and Awards

Lauren Beaulieu was invited to be on the editorial board of Behavioral Interventions.

Demara Bennett has been selected to serve as an expert member of the American Professional Society on the Abuse of Children (APSAC) Child Maltreatment Reporting Laws policy analysis committee.

Julie Costopoulos was featured in a newspaper article regarding the partnership between the Forensic Psychology Undergraduate program and Fellsmere Police Department.


Nicole Gravina was appointed to the editorial board of Behavior Analysis in Practice.

Maria Lavooy was nominated and won the Psi Chi Southeastern Region advisor award.

Radhika Krishnamurthy was elected to a two-year term (2018–2020) as chair of the Women's Issues Committee of the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology (NCSSP), and member of the NCSSP Executive Committee.

Christopher A. Podlesnik guest edited, with Federico Sanabria, the Special Issue of Behavioural Processes for the Society for the Quantitative Analyses of Behavior. He also chaired the 40th annual meeting of the Society for the Quantitative Analyses of Behavior.

Darby Proctor is an editorial board member for the Biology Letters journal (2018–2020).

Erin Richard received the 2017 inaugural Journal of Business and Psychology Stan Gully Award for Sustained Excellence in Reviewing. This is an award recognizing a JBP board member for seven or more years of sustained excellence in reviewing.

Kristi Van Sickie joined the 2018 editorial board of the journal Practice Innovation.

Student Honors and Awards

At FIT’s 2018 Honors Convocation, the following students from the School of Psychology and School of Behavior Analysis were recognized as Outstanding Students:

Undergraduate Students: Paris Roserie and Maria Cuervo Cane, Psychology; Brenna Balakar, Jacob Buck, Caleigh Covell, Baylee Keener and Katie Lombardo, Forensic Psychology; Rebecca Blanco, Tommy “Lorraine” Hill, Chance Kolmeyer and John Grayson Killebrew, Applied Psychology; Lucy Lula, Criminal Justice

Graduate Students: Mary Caitlin Fertitta, Lauren Goworowski, Megan Hart and Demila Till Ogot, Clinical Psychology Program; Alicia Camella, Industrial/Organizational Psychology M.S. Program; Ronald Clark and Courtney Hannula, Organizational Behavior Management M.S. Program; Trevor Noah and Kyi Phy Nyein, Industrial/Organizational Psychology Ph.D. Program; Daniel Cymbal, Andre Giesecke, Kaitlyn Gokey, Amber Lampert, Lauren Sakata and Kelly Ubedegrove, Applied Behavioral Analysis.

Graduate students: Kristen Moore, Mollie Mulholland and Mara Rowcliffe, Clinical Psychology Program; Joshua Bush, Industrial/Organizational Psychology M.S. Program; Ryan Kimball, Organizational Behavior Management M.S. Program; Yumiko Mochinushi and Charles Scott, Industrial/Organizational Psychology Ph.D. Program; James Bevacqua, Thuong Ho, Jason Lewis, April Rowland, Gabrielle Trimlett and Stephanie Wathen, Applied Behavior Analysis.
Where are they now?
Do you know a former alum who has said to you “I don’t ever get a copy of Journey.” Or “I wonder why so-and-so doesn’t write to me from FIT anymore.” Well—maybe they are among the missing. Each semester when we send out Journey, we receive a multitude of address updates and a goodly number of “return to sender—address unknown.” If you know someone who may not have let us know of their recent move, or recent change in email—call them, email them, contact them in some way and ask them to get in touch with us. We are always interested in hearing what our alumni are up to, where they are headed and what wonderful accomplishments they are making. Let us hear from you. We want to expand our alumni update section. Send your information any time throughout the year, not just when you hear from us about the next issue of Journey.

Take care, be well and keep in touch. Send your updates to jmccray@fit.edu.

P.S. Your pictures are a welcome addition, please include yourself in the pictures of your children and pets … after all … we went to school with you!

Please renew my support for the coming year.
I continue to fully support the FIT School of Psychology’s goal of providing graduate research assistantships and resource support for training and research in the department’s important programs.

I give my annual support to FIT’s School of Psychology for the coming year in the amount of: □ $50 □ $75 □ $100 □ Other $ _______________________

Please make check payable to FIT School of Psychology Endowment Fund and return with this renewal invoice in the enclosed envelope, or mail to:
FIT School of Psychology, 150 W. University Blvd., Melbourne, FL 32901.

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