



Psychology Matters

A Publication of the Wayne State University
Department of Psychology

Summer 2020

A Letter from The Chair



Dear Friends of the WSU Psychology Department,

What a difference a year has made! Last year I was writing about spring and how the trees and flowers had begun to bloom around the campus. This year I write to you as our nation is enduring two challenges: COVID-19 and violence against Black Americans. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, mid-way through the winter term we had to adapt quickly to the 'stay-at-home' orders. While we were able to move teaching, meetings and other work completely online, other things like research came to a complete halt for many. In true Warrior Spirit, our departmental instructors converted their classes to an online format in less than two weeks. Our advisors and our staff worked tirelessly to make sure that faculty and students were taken care. Together, our faculty, graduate students and staff successfully and effectively transitioned to remote learning and working. I express my sincerest gratitude to each of them for meeting these challenges and helping the department excel in this time of crisis. While the Fall situation

is still not clear as to whether WSU will have face-to-face classes, we as a department have decided to continue with remote/online courses, as safety is our #1 priority.

As a country, we were reminded of the long history of violence against Black Americans following the very public display of the unwarranted, violent, and racially charged deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. Because diversity and inclusion are such important topics to me, I reached out to Dr. Marquita

Chamblee, Associate Provost for Diversity & Inclusion/Chief Diversity Officer to hold a town hall with the department in late June. This very well attended town hall which was facilitated by members of Dr. Chamblee's team, provided a compassionate and respectful space to have open discussions about race, process feelings about recent events and how to heal in the midst of such trauma. We also took this opportunity to discuss specific steps that our department can take to combat racism. I will be working closely with our Diversity committee to implement the plans that were derived from this very important meeting.

In the midst of these challenging times, I am pleased that we are able to report many exciting things happening in the department. In addition to being strongly committed to our teaching mission, our faculty continue to publish and present top scholarly work on a range of diverse topics. Please visit our department webpage at <http://www.clas.wayne.edu/psychology/> and read news about the other recent accomplishments of our faculty, as well as look at our faculty page where you can find information on each of our faculty member's current research and teaching activities. The variety of research projects underway in the department is quite impressive, most of which include graduate and undergraduate students research assistants.

Please enjoy reading more about our department's activities over the past year in this newsletter. I also want to personally thank you for your past generous donations. These gifts allow us to expand and move forward in new and creative ways. We greatly appreciate all continued and new support!

Finally, we love to hear from our alum! Please see the back page on how to do so.

Sincerely,

Scott Bowen Professor and Chair

Follow us on Social Media!



<https://www.facebook.com/WayneStatePsychology>



<https://www.instagram.com/psychologywsu/>



<https://twitter.com/WSUPsychology>



<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2P7i83x7NkxxpEt1mkpo1A>



<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8292134>



Remembering Dr. Ira Firestone

By Scott Bowen, Ph.D.

Over the past year, the department lost a very dear colleague, Dr. Ira Firestone. Ira, a retired Emeritus Full Psychology faculty member, served WSU for more than 45 years until his retirement in 2013. Dr. Firestone was hired in 1966 and was promoted to Full Professor in 1979. He had a long history of teaching, scholarship and a continuous and wide-ranging history of service commitment to the University.

Dr. Firestone was also one of the founding members of the psychology department and played a key role in its development. During his career, Professor Firestone mentored innumerable undergraduates and forty-four dissertations. He had a long history of continuous publications in peer-reviewed journals. In addition, he served on just about every service committee and working group at the Department, College and University level; he participated in virtually every service activity possible to help the university. Ira was indeed an outstanding faculty member who devoted years of excellent service to Wayne State University. He will truly be missed.

“Life doesn’t make any sense without interdependence. We need each other, and the sooner we learn that, the better for us all.”

- Erik Erikson

Warriors In The News

Harman Singh (Undergraduate Advisor) is the Director of Operations for Seva4Everybody. It is comprised of members from the Sikh community and has partnered with other local nonprofits to provide funds and resources to communities in need. Link: <https://www.wxyz.com/news/coronavirus/helping-each-other/sikh-volunteers-assisting-detroiters>



Faculty Achievements

- Lee Wurm won the President’s Award for Excellence in Teaching
- Noa Ofen was awarded Career Development Chair to expand her work and focus on assessing the neural basis of recognition memory decisions in children and adolescents. The Career Development Chairs were established by generous grants to the Wayne State Fund, which provides recipients financial support, encouragement and recognition at a critical time in their careers
- Antonia Abbey and Mark Lumley were elected into the Academy of Scholars as lifetime members
- Valerie Simon was promoted to full professor
- Jessica Damoiseaux was promoted to Associate Professor with tenure
- John Woodard won a 2019 CLAS teaching award
- Glenn Weisfeld published a new book, “Evolved Emotions: An Interdisciplinary and Functional Analysis”
- Joe Fitzgerald and Glenn Weisfeld were awarded Emeritus status
- Valerie Simon's R03 grant entitled, "The Interpersonal Dynamics of Violence Exposure and Adolescents' Autonomic Regulation" was funded
- Antonia Abbey’s research on perceptions of attractiveness was highlighted in a recent BBC story
- Jennifer Gomez was a guest on the BBC Radio 4 Show, Woman's Hour, on an episode called "Why Black Woman Struggle to Discuss Sexual Violence"
- Lars Johnson was a guest on SoLUXLife podcast “The Mindset for Success “

Psychology Training Clinic Moves from Rackham to Rands

By Douglas Barnett, Ph.D., Clinic Director

The Psychology Clinic is where graduate students in clinical psychology obtain training, experience, and supervision from the clinical faculty for conducting psychological assessment, psychological interventions, and community projects. The clinic is open to the public 50 hours weekly, almost year round. We serve children, adolescents, adults, families, and couples who are seeking mental health assessments and services. We also contract with various community agencies to provide consultation and services in the community. In addition to its training and service missions, the clinic also promotes research on all aspects of clinical training and practice.



The William C. Rands House was built in 1914

Highlights From The Clinic:

One of the most requested services at the clinic has been our Dialectical Behavior Therapy Program (DBT) for adults, led by Dr. Marla Bartoi, Associate Director of the Psychology Clinic. This highly effective, research supported program offers a two hour weekly intervention for clients who have significant difficulty regulating strong emotions such as anxiety, anger, and sadness. These are persons who might have diagnoses such as borderline personality disorder and suicidal thoughts. Clients are asked to commit 6 months to staying in the program and also must be in individual therapy in addition to the weekly group. The DBT program began 10 years ago, made possible by a grant from the Ethel and James Flinn Foundation.

The clinic also has an ongoing collaboration with Children's Hospital of Michigan's General Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine Clinic (GPAM), led by Dr. Marilyn Franklin. At GPAM, our team provides mental health services integrated with this primary care clinic. Mental health screening and feedback are available to all youth coming to GPAM. Those youth and their caregivers who screen positive for mental health problems are provided with a variety of options and encouragement to obtain mental health treatment. Many chose to receive empirically supported individual and family therapy from our team of student clinicians. The team serves youth with significant trauma exposure, suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, and other behavioral difficulties. These services are made possible through funding from the Children's Hospital of Michigan Foundation.

The clinic also helps to staff a school-based health clinic at Hamtramck High School. The clinic team works with other healthcare professionals and school personnel to provide screening and counseling to students at the school who are in need. Also led by Dr. Marilyn Franklin, this program is made possible through support from The Jewish Foundation of Michigan.

In the summer of 2019, the clinic relocated from its home in the Rackham Memorial Educational Building for the past 15 years, over to the Rands House located at 5229 Cass Avenue. We see this as an exciting new beginning in which we will be more on campus and further continue our assistance to the greater Metro-Detroit area as well as Wayne State.

Remembering Jeri Pajor



It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of former Clinic Secretary Jeri Pajor. Jeri was with our department from 2007—2011. Please follow the link below to a tribute to her from the Department of Anthropology.

<https://clas.wayne.edu/anthropology/news/tribute-to-jeri-pajor-39617>

Faculty Updates

New Faculty



Ana Daugherty



Olivenne Skinner

Retiring Faculty

Margo Bowman

(no picture available)



Glenn Weisfeld

Leaving WSU



Anmarie Caño



Lee Wurm

Clinical Psychology Alumni Celebration

By Mark A. Lumley, Ph.D., Director of Clinical Training

On Friday, Sept 27, 2019, the Clinical Psychology Ph.D. program had an Alumni Celebration. This gathering was prompted by several important events in our program happening at the same time. First, we celebrated the move and grand opening of our Psychology Clinic from the Rackham Building to the Rands House on the main campus.

Second, program alumnus, James Prochaska, was awarded the university's highest honor (Distinguished Alumni Award) and was on campus for this recognition. Third, this academic year will witness us reaching the 500th graduate of the clinical psychology program. Finally, we wanted to celebrate Professor Doug Whitman's many contributions over his 46 years on faculty, including recently ending a term as Dean of our College of Education. These were great reasons to bring our alumni together--something we have not done for about 15 years—but we also wanted to have them reconnect with each other and with the program, department, and university.



Mark Lumley, Ph.D. speaks at Alumni Event

The event ran from 2:00 to 7:00 pm and was held in the Law School. There was an initial time of gathering in the atrium followed by a time of presentations, greetings, celebrations in the auditorium. Afterward, there was a wonderful reception with food and tours of the main campus and our new clinic. We very much appreciate the WSU Alumni Association and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for their financial support of this event.

The WSU Department of Psychology's Ph.D. programs started in 1955 with six clinical psychology students and one industrial/organizational student. We were able to reach nearly 300 of our clinical program's 495 alumni, and 109 of them attended the Alumni Celebration. Attendees ranged from our most "senior" alum present, Jim Prochaska (entering class of 1965) to a 2019 graduate; however, the median year that alumni in attendance had begun our program was 1989—fully 30 years ago! They were joined by the current clinical faculty and staff, some past faculty (e.g., Brian Lakey), and various administrators.

Here is a link to a Dropbox that has many wonderful photos of the event--of alumni mingling and some grouped by the year they started. I draw your attention to picture 146, which shows the entire group of alumni in attendance; picture 147, of Doug Whitman with some of the 90 (!) PhD students he has mentored; and picture 179, of some of the many African American clinical psychologists who have graduated from our program over the years.

Link to Alumni Celebration presentation and pictures:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/2xfia2uicnmdgzj/AADjbUG8QLk8ilUptDBIvhaza?dl=0>

At the top of the Dropbox is the Powerpoint presentation that I gave at the Celebration, and I have added commentary and pictures from the event to help you follow the presentation. Please check it out. You will see the formal gathering time (the WSU President and Provost, the CLAS Dean, Psychology Chair, etc.) as well as a pictorial history of the four Psychology Department buildings and the four Psychology Clinic buildings. The presentation also recognizes the many alumni who have contributed to the program, shows program changes over the years, and shares some recent outcomes—and check out the 14 marriages that came out of our program! Finally, the Dropbox also has a 2.5-minute video greeting from Anne Knox, the beloved Clinic secretary for so many years. She was not able to attend, but she sent her greetings.

Overall, it was a wonderful and moving event—much gratitude was expressed not only by the many local alumni in attendance but also those who made the trip from other states.

We are looking forward to keeping in touch with our great alumni.

A Psychologist at the United Nations

By Paul Toro, Ph.D.

Professor Paul Toro from our Department of Psychology recently was invited to speak at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. His presentation was given on February 17 of 2020 as part of a session entitled “Preventing and Recovering from Homelessness: Contributions from Psychology.” Dr. Toro and two other psychologists presented (one from New York and one from Ireland). Dr. Toro’s presentation was entitled “Examining Homelessness in 14 Developed Nations: Prevalence and Public Opinion.” Professor Toro presented results from a series of surveys he and various colleagues around the world have conducted over the past 20 years in 14 different nations in Europe and North America.



The survey methods used were designed to obtain representative national samples of citizens contacted by telephone (both fixed and mobile). Based on the total sample of nearly 10,000 across the 14 nations, Dr. Toro’s findings indicated a wide range of estimates for lifetime literal homelessness. The highest rate was found in Spain, with 12.6% of all respondents indicating some history of literal homelessness. High rates were also found in the United Kingdom (8.6%), Canada (7.6%), and the US (6.1%), as well as in Belgium (6.3%) and Sweden (6.2%). The lowest rates were found in Ireland (1.9%), France (2.0%), Germany (2.4%), and the Czech Republic (2.4%), with intermediate rates found in Portugal, Poland, Italy, and the Netherlands.

Dr. Toro suggested possible explanations for this wide variation in rates, indicating that, in several of the nations with low rates (e.g., France and Germany), there are generous social benefits and readily available health care services, whereas in several of the nations with high rates (e.g., Spain, the US, and the UK), such benefits and services are not nearly so generous. Dr. Toro suggested that changing national and local policies may lead to reductions in the actual rates of homelessness. He mentioned an interesting recent case in point: In the past decade or so, Finland has engaged in an aggressive national plan to eliminate homelessness by, essentially, making it a right for all citizens to have quality permanent housing. Finland has seen a near elimination of emergency shelters for homeless people in their nation as a result. Many other nations could learn from this Finnish experiment.

In 10 of the surveys reported on by Dr. Toro, an array of national differences were also found on public attitudes, opinion and knowledge about homelessness. For example, considering a broad factor assessing the extent to which respondents felt that the personal failings of homeless people were responsible for their homelessness, high scores were found for the US, Canada, Portugal, and Poland, while relatively low scores were found for Germany, France, and Italy. On another factor assessing the extent to which respondents felt that economic factors were responsible for homelessness, high scores were found for Poland, Germany, France, Italy, and Portugal, with low scores for the US and Canada. Dr. Toro concluded that national opinion on homelessness correlates in predictable ways with actual rates of homelessness, with more negative opinions being found in nations with higher rates. As we all know, correlation does not prove causation: While it is possible that more positive national attitudes toward homeless people may promote more solutions reducing the rate of homelessness, it is also possible that high rates of homelessness breed negative attitudes.

Recent Ph.D. Graduates

Justin Aqua
 Nia Billings
 Julia Briskin
 Shannon Clark
 Hannah Holmes
 Ledina Imami
 Robert Kanser
 Daniel Krenn
 Dana McCall
 Laura Northerner
 Kiel Opperman
 Jamie Piercy
 Laura Rowley
 Kelsey Sala-Hamrick
 Kraig Shattuck
 Britta K. Shine
 Lingfei Tang

Recent I/O M.A. Graduates

Jacqueline Paige Connors
 Nicholas Joseph Farr
 Kayla M. Gilmore
 Elyse Holly Graessley
 Teodora Deianca Lazar
 Marshall Jude Marcero
 Melissa Anne Mccabee
 Samantha Lauren Mckenzie
 Aubrey Mercer
 Daniel Millard Ragan
 Kortney Lynn Rea
 Sydney Santoviz
 Chelsea Shackelford
 Mallory C. Smith
 Daniel Stephen Wallace
 Megan C. Yousif
 Jake Thomas Zryd



Phi Beta Kappa members-in-course: Psychology

The following undergraduates from the *Department of Psychology* have been selected as members in course to receive an invitation to join Phi Beta Kappa:

*Rachel A. Bruinsma
 David Klemet
 Miranda Mae Moffat*

Phi Beta Kappa is the nation's oldest academic honor society (founded December 5, 1776); it celebrates and advocates excellence in the liberal arts and sciences. It is a highly selective honor: Only 10% of universities are awarded a Phi Beta Kappa chapter and no school may elect more than 10% of a graduating class. About one college senior out of 100 nationwide will be invited to join Phi Beta Kappa each year.

The honor of becoming a member in course reflects the students' considerable dedication and accomplishments and also those of the educational environment that facilitated the students' development.

PASS: Students Helping Students

By Shelly Seguin, M.A., ASO IV

Psychology Academic Support Services, commonly known as **PASS**, was started in 2011 by Shelly Seguin and student Stephanie Chastain. Staffed by undergraduate Psychology students, PASS provides free peer mentoring, one-on-one tutoring, and group study. While there are other mentoring and tutoring programs at WSU, PASS is unique – it is the only program that is major-specific and staffed by a team of volunteers. In addition to offering over 50 office hours per week, PASS holds two annual events: PASS Open House Week in the fall and PASS Fest in the spring. PASS has grown to over 30 student mentors and had over 400 tutoring contacts last year. During these ‘learn from home’ times, PASS is virtually providing services to students. If you’d like more information about PASS, please email

psychologymentors@wayne.edu or contact the PASS supervisor, Shelly Seguin at sseguin@wayne.edu



Reflections on Four Years at WSU

By Rachel Bruinsma

Just a few weeks ago, I graduated with my bachelor's degree in Psychology. It felt surreal to end my undergraduate career in the midst of a global pandemic. Social distancing prevented much of the pomp and circumstance I expected when graduating with my degree, so I have tried to find my own ways to celebrate and reflect upon the last four years. Looking back, I was struck by how much I had accomplished during this time. There is no question, however, that I could have accomplished so much without the many avenues of support I received.

Just after I chose to attend WSU, I was contacted by the ReBUILDetroit program. ReBUILDetroit is a NIH-funded program whose mission is to encourage students from underrepresented groups to attend and excel in biomedical graduate programs and careers. Through BUILD, I was able to have funded summer research experiences on campus, working with Dr. Annmarie Caño through two summers. The BUILD staff were always wonderful sources of support, providing me with the tools I needed to become a confident research assistant. The BUILD program laid the foundation for my love of research and guided me as I became involved in undergraduate research.

My freshman year, I joined the PASS (Psychology Academic Support Services) team as a student mentor. Being a PASS mentor was one of my most fulfilling experiences during my time at Wayne State. Every week, I had the chance to help students in a really significant way. Some of the students I worked with came to PASS again and again to get help with their classes. I was able to build meaningful connections with my mentees and help them learn and explore their talents. I made some wonderful friends in the people I met through PASS and gained many connections within the psychology department due to my position as a PASS mentor. I truly love being a PASS mentor, and it will definitely be one of the things I miss the most.

My sophomore year, I applied to the Ronald E. McNair Scholars program. There, I met Dr. Bianca Suárez, the director of the program. She has been a constant support and helped me tremendously whenever I doubted myself. The McNair Scholars program, like the BUILD program, nurtured my love of research and even funded me to attend multiple research conferences, though unfortunately, what was supposed to be my last conference presentation of my undergraduate career at the University of Maryland was cancelled due to COVID. I learned some invaluable lessons about research ethics during the summer research seminars that I will carry with me throughout my research career.

The summer before my senior year, I traveled to the University of Delaware for their Undergraduate Summer Research Program. I was able to spend 10 weeks immersed in research that I was passionate about, examining the impacts of distress on glycemic control in diabetic patients. There, I worked with Dr. J-P Laurenceau, who remains a tremendous support, helping me turn my work from the summer into my honors thesis and helping me hone my research skills through many hours patiently teaching me new statistical techniques.

During my last year, I joined the Psychology department's advising team as the Academic Advising Student Assistant. It was definitely a step up from the jobs at hotel front desks I worked for three of the last four years. It was wonderful to be able to work even more closely with the psychology department, and I really enjoyed being able to immerse myself even more within the psychology department.

These are only a few of the many experiences that shaped my time at Wayne State as an undergraduate student. I could spend hours listing how many of my classes and professors contributed to my growth as a scholar, the other students I met who broadened my thinking, and the countless readings and assignments that taught me discipline.

I will miss my time at Wayne State tremendously. I was able to meet so many interesting, intelligent people and get involved in so many new opportunities. I loved my classes and learned new ways of thinking that broadened my worldview and improved my thinking. I made friendships that will last a lifetime, and even met who I hope will be my life partner. I learned so much more about myself, others, and society. I am sorry to leave it behind as a student, but I look forward to continuing my relationship with the university as an alumnus. Wayne State is truly a unique place to learn and grow as a student and I am so glad I chose to spend my undergraduate career here.

There are so, so many people I want to thank who have supported me in so many ways during the past four years. This is by no means a complete list and is presented in no particular order.

Shelly Seguin	Dr. Samuele Zilioli
Dr. Annmarie Caño	Angelica Corley
Dr. Jean-Philippe Laurenceau	Bethany Pester
Dr. Mark Lumley	Hallie Tankha
Dr. Heather Dillaway	Vincent Bruinsma
(Future Drs.) Gabrielle Gordon & Sara Elhasan	James McCloskey
Clinton LeClerc	Rose Morin
Michael Santioni	The Lumley lobbies
Dr. Farron McIntee	The Homies...you know who you are ;)
Jennifer Tabb	My 2016 ReBUILDetroit cohort
Dr. Bianca Suárez	All current & past PASS mentors
Corinne Forsy	

...and so many more.

Psychology At WSU

Camila Cascardo is currently a medical student at WSU's medical school who chose to major in Psychology.

Learn why studying Psychology in Detroit will help Camila

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_9-ZNGjl8tA



Celebrating our Graduating Class of 2020

The Psychology Graduation Reception is an annual spring event to honor our graduating psychology majors. Graduating students and their loved ones come together with faculty and advisors to celebrate this exciting milestone in their lives. It was disappointing that we were unable to hold the 2020 Psychology Graduation Reception, scheduled for April 29th, due to the COVID-19 virus. Psychology faculty and advisors created a video to congratulate our graduates.

Please follow the link here to see the video:

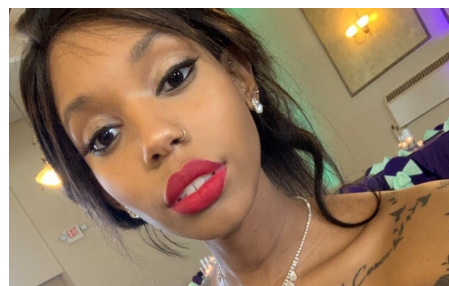
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v6hYH2q1vog&t>



Remembering Bri'Jon Moore

By Shelly Seguin, M.A., ASO IV

The Department of Psychology mourns the loss of Bri'Jon Moore (2/21/1997 – 2/04/2020). Bri'Jon was the embodiment of Warrior Strong. Despite battling an unrelenting illness throughout her time at WSU, Bri'Jon was a devoted student who planned her medical treatments around her classes and exams. Dr. Susie Brummelte, one of her professors shared, "Bri'Jon was always so polite and thoughtful. She had such a positive attitude despite her facing a life-threatening illness and undergoing painful treatments. It was amazing, she just always seemed in good spirits. I have never seen a more dedicated student. She was a fighter, a true Warrior."



Bri'Jon dreamed of a career in nursing and planned to apply to nursing programs after graduation. As a psychology major, she focused her coursework accordingly and earned a concentration in health psychology. Giovanna Moore, Bri'Jon's mother shared, "She was determined and focused on not allowing her cancer to defeat her. She found ways to inspire and be a fighter until the end. She battled cancer for eight years. She tried to help friends and family prioritize their goals and dreams by

being an example." With 104 credit hours, Bri'Jon was in the home stretch of earning her Bachelor's degree when her health deteriorated. While in Hospice care, the Board of Governors approved awarding the Bachelor of Science in Psychology from the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The Department of Psychology Chair, Dr. Scott Bowen accompanied by Dr. Brummelte visited Bri'Jon at her home to present the diploma, where she was surrounded by her family. Sadly, Bri'Jon passed away just a few days after receiving her diploma. Bri'Jon will be remembered for her positive attitude, her genuine passion for education and her fighting spirit.

Remembering Dwayne Carrero Berry



Dwayne Carrero Berry receives a bachelor of arts in psychology with minors in Latino/a and Latin American studies and peace and conflict studies. Dwayne's classmates, professors and advisors describe him as an inspiring and charismatic young man. He was a proud Wayne State Warrior, serving as a peer mentor and student ambassador for the Center for Latino/a and Latin American Studies for three years.

His dedication to helping fellow students and his participation in campus activities earned him a Peer

Mentor of the Year Award from the WSU Learning Communities Office. Dwayne was proud of his Afro-Latino heritage and presented original research at Wayne State conferences on race and identity. Although he was diagnosed with heart disease at the age of 19, he used his experiences to provide comfort to others facing similar challenges, starting a support group and visiting hospitals to encourage patients who, like him, were undergoing heart transplants and open-heart surgery. The university community mourns his loss and celebrates his loving and generous spirit.

An Interview with Karen Simpson

By Shelly Seguin, M.A., ASO IV



Karen Simpson named 2020 Charles Watkins Award Recipient

Named in honor and memory of Mr. Charles Watkins, this award recognizes a graduating student who withstood extraordinary circumstances and significant hardships while in pursuit of their bachelor's degree. Students selected for this award demonstrate tenacity, perseverance, hard work and exceptional effort. The Department of Psychology's Undergraduate Committee receives nominations from advisors and/or faculty for this award and selects only one student per academic year. The committee unanimously agreed that Karen Simpson's journey at Wayne State University embodies the spirit of this award. We interviewed Karen about her experience at WSU:

Tell us about your WSU journey.

I was on the pre-med track at Eastern Michigan University from 1974-78 and transferred to WSU in 1979. Unfortunately, I had to drop out in 1981. Even though I was nearing completion of my degree, I needed to work full time so my education was put on the back burner. In 2018 I heard about the **Warrior Way Back** program; that was the catalyst for me connecting back to WSU. I met with Shelly Seguin in Psychology (in December 2018, the last day before the holiday break!) and she laid out the path for me to complete my degree. I started back in Winter 2019 and I am taking my final two classes this Spring/Summer term.

What inspired or motivated you to complete your Bachelor's Degree?

There were two main reasons: to be more competitive in the job market and to finish what I started.

I had very satisfying and successful careers in my time away from WSU. After I left in 1981, I found myself working in media for over 20 years; in production and then sales/marketing. In television, I worked for local affiliates of CBS and ABC; and then in radio: WOMC and WRIF. I left media when I was presented with an exciting opportunity in the technology field and did that for several years. Following our hearts, my best friend, my sister and I created a program with inner-city youth, teaching them life skills such as etiquette, self-esteem, as well as career skills such as interviewing and professionalism. We transitioned our non-profit to another agency and I found myself needing more financially secure employment. I was hired as the territory manager for the Aurora Casket Company and was very successful in the role: I was the national growth leader for three years. The company was hit hard with the economic downturn in the mid-2000s and by 2009, my region, along with my position, was phased out. And because there was a nation-wide economic downturn, there was a lot of competition in the job market. Despite my work experience, without a degree my opportunities were limited and I was faced with the truth – that not having my degree was holding me back. I worked as a business manager for Lancome Beauty with Macy's from 2011-2015, but it wasn't a job that I enjoyed. I left Macy's and became licensed as an independent life-insurance broker – while I enjoy this work, I don't find it fulfilling. So, I am motivated to finish my degree because there's so much I have to offer and my degree will afford me new opportunities. The other main reason I decided to come back is that not finishing my degree has been a 'thorn in my side' for decades! It's a personal goal. I need to finish what I started.

What was it like returning as an adult learner?

Honestly...daunting. I was so excited to be back in academia; it has always been very important to me, but I was very scared. I was coming back to university at a time when a lot of people are retiring! It was four decades since I'd been in school and everything was different. I had to learn to navigate new technology, the campus, and the culture. I felt intimidated. I wasn't sure if I'd be able to keep up with young students and I was worried that I wouldn't be able to learn as well as I did when I was a

An Interview with Karen Simpson (continued)

young person. Everything felt like it was moving much faster than I remembered – I felt like a fish out of water. So, I was really scared coming back. Now I am in my fifth and final semester and in reflecting back, yes it was scary, but it's been like a brand new experience for me in so many good ways.

What was your experience as a psychology major?

It's been awesome. I always loved it, but studying psychology now is so much different – it's better now. I have a lifetime of experiences, so I'm learning these concepts with that experienced perspective. I have a new appreciation and understanding.

The Psychology Department is my safe space...it's my home. I've had the most incredible instructors and I developed relationships with each of them. My fellow classmates were nice, but with me being so much older, I found it difficult to make the kind of connections I saw them making with each other. Where I made the connections was with the instructors, my advisor and with PASS – and those relationships became invaluable. I attended all office hours and my instructors were willing to provide additional support when I needed it. My stats instructor, Greg Norville, often stayed with me after class to make sure I fully grasped the content. And two of my TAs (Isabel Cantarella & Youjin Jung) even came in on weekends to meet with me. PASS has also been a tremendous support. They are the most amazing and diverse group of students. I had special bonds with two PASS mentors in particular, Jordan Gootee and Rachel Bruinsma. Jordan helped me so much my first semester, spending hours with me. She graduated in 2019 and since then I've been working consistently with Rachel. She's been an angel. And my advisor Shelly has been more than I can ask for (actually their whole advising program is incredible) – she connected me with lots of resources and has been a constant source of support and encouragement. There was no way that I could have gotten through all of this without those resources – period, no way.

Do you have any special memories of your experience at WSU?

Yes, I have so many! They're all since I returned in Winter 2019.

- The relationships I've built with my advisor, instructors, TAs – it just meant a lot to me.
- Getting an 'A' in Dr. Antonia Abbey's PSY 3250 (Psychology of Gender) class was one of the most fulfilling things ever! She was a great professor with high standards.
- I got a 4.0 my very first semester back and then I knew I made the right decision to return. I knew I could do it.
- Connecting with PASS – and again, especially the relationships with Jordan and Rachel. But no matter who was in the PASS office, whenever I came in they made me feel comfortable and welcomed. I was determined to get A's and the PASS students showed me what it takes to be a successful student. I aspired to achieve the kind of academic excellence I saw in them.
- I was invited by my SPA 1020 teacher, Michael Anderson (who I adored) to attend his dissertation defense. I had never done anything like that before and I was really touched that he invited me. It was an amazing experience – to see the culmination of his academic journey. It was really a big deal. I had to keep the tears back – I felt proud of him and *inspired*. That experience made me want to keep pushing. I don't want to stop learning; I love everything about this world (of academia). Since I'm talking about Spanish, I have to also mention my former SPA 1010 instructor Rebecca Sawyer. She was so amazing that she tutored me through SPA 1020! And my SPA 2010 instructor, Ahmed Bitar, was equally supportive and amazing.

An Interview with Karen Simpson (continued)

- Being selected for the Hawkins Annual Spring/Summer Scholarship from CLAS (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences). I am so honored and so appreciative. I was not expecting to receive this generous scholarship in my final semester but I was nominated by my advisor Shelly and another advisor who's been just so helpful and awesome, Corinne Forys.
- And of course, being selected for the Charles Watkins Award. I don't even have words to express how much this means to me. I'm truly honored.

What advice do you have for students returning after a long absence?

First, it's going to be scary. You'll likely feel overwhelmed. But, if I did it, you can do it!

Recipe for success: build relationships, utilize resources and work hard.

Relationships. Everyone I encountered at WSU wanted me to be successful. They want to help. But as the student, you need to make an effort to connect to build those relationships. You need to establish up front that you are committed and serious and then demonstrate that you're serious through your actions. When instructors see that you're working hard, they'll go the extra mile to make sure you're successful. You have to be really connected to your advisor. Once I got with a really excellent advisor, I realized what I'd been missing. I needed structure and guidance to navigate my way through and my advisor explained everything. Go in there prepared with questions and concerns so that they can direct you to resources. The relationship with your advisor is crucial.

Utilize resources. I could write a book about my experience utilizing resources at WSU. Whatever you need help with, there is someone to help. Len Hernandez in the Math Literacy Center helped me with my math anxiety. He's non-judgmental and I always felt so supported and cared for. Actually, that was my experience with every support service I used – they've all been great.

Work hard. This one is self-explanatory. Please don't expect it to be a cake walk. You're earning a college degree, so naturally you're going to have to work hard. But hard work alone isn't enough – you need a support system through building relationships and utilizing resources.

How has this experience changed you?

I don't take education for granted. It's a privilege to go to school to earn a degree. I'm a different person now than I was when I started this journey back in 1974. And this older, wiser, more experienced me got so much more out of this experience. Completing my degree has given me a new-found confidence. It's a confidence to redefine and reinvent myself, to make a mark, to leave a different kind of footprint on this world. I was so scared to return to school, but finding success in academia at my age is validating and empowering. I feel transformed. God is good and I am so grateful that He made all of this possible. I am humbled and amazed by how much He has blessed my journey at WSU.

What's next for you after graduation?

I'm not sure yet! Ultimately I'd like to go to graduate school for something that would allow me to work in academia because I just want to be part of this world. To see the changes in WSU from 1981 to 2020, I just love what's happening on this campus and I'm honored to be part of it. Even though I am an older student, I am graduating with a current degree. I'm blessed with great health and lots of energy so this is just the beginning of the next chapter of my life. I am really excited to see what the future holds. I'm proud to be part of the 2020 graduating class!

Alumni Updates



Jessica Irwin, Ph.D.

Jessica Irwin and Marjorie Beeghly are writing a paper together. She completed a postdoc at UCLA and is currently completing one at Chapman University. She is now living in Redlands CA, and was recently hired as Assistant Professor at the University of La Verne (near Pomona CA) to begin in July 2020. She'll be teaching stats and research methods this coming semester, then she'll move on to additionally teaching experimental. Eventually, she hopes, she'll be able to teach developmental, including grad courses.

Clara Zundel



Clara Zundel graduated with a Psych major from WSU, and is now in her 4th year in the Behavioral Neuroscience Ph.D. program at Boston University's School of Medicine. Her research focuses on the neuropathological and neurobehavioral consequences of Gulf War Illness. Her long-term interest is understanding the effects of environmental neurotoxicants on the brain and behavior and its impacts on mental health.

She has accrued 8 publications on which she is the first or second author on four. She has also presented seven posters at national and international conferences. Clara has also been a teaching assistant for one of the required courses in the program.

Alumni, We Want To Hear From You!

Staying in touch with alumni is very important to us!

We would love to hear about some of your professional accomplishments since becoming a WSU graduate.

- ◆ What year did you graduate?
- ◆ Where are you and what are you doing?
- ◆ Would you like to share with new and incoming students any advice for making the most of their WSU experience?
- ◆ Do you have any employment tips regarding interviewing, job searching, etc., now that you are out in the real world?

Please feel free to write us at psychologyinfo@wayne.edu and tell us all about it.