Navigating His Way … to Psychology at IPFW

Ryan Yoder, Ph.D., took the long route to majoring in psychology. Following a brief stint as a business management major, Yoder was “undecided” during his sophomore year at the University of South Florida (USF). He then explored marine biology, horticulture, and industrial/organizational psychology, before deciding to major in both anthropology and psychology. While enrolled in Physiological Psychology and Physiology of Learning during his senior year, he became fascinated with the physiological mechanisms that contribute directly to our cognitive functions. He then chose not to spend an extra year to obtain a second major, but instead to focus on his interest in physiological psychology.

As Yoder approached the end of his undergraduate studies, he faced the same question that many students face—what am I going to do after I graduate? He did not see a connection between his interest in physiological psychology and the job market. After discussing his interests and the available options with a career counselor and with his mentor at USF, Yoder began to consider graduate school. He then worked as a lab technician for a year before deciding that he definitely wanted to pursue graduate studies and become a professor.

During his fourth year of graduate school at Bowling Green State University, he received an award for his research from the Society for Neuroscience. Receipt of this award depends on a nomination by and votes from regional scientists. This was the point at which he realized that he could be successful in a career in science.

After five years in a post-doctoral position at Dartmouth College, Yoder moved with his wife and two young daughters to Fort Wayne to join the faculty of the IPFW psychology department. What are Yoder’s comments on his first year as an assistant professor at IPFW? “I really like IPFW’s continued growth. Despite the current economic woes, IPFW continues to expand and to provide many resources to students and faculty that facilitate our ability to concentrate on our studies.”

During his first year, Yoder has concentrated on teaching classes in physiological psychology and research methods, and getting his lab ready for research. He began conducting experiments in his new lab this spring. His current research uses the performance of mice on spatial navigation tasks to study how they learn about their environment. In these studies, he teaches mice to find food that is hidden in several locations within a maze, and then uses their ability to find these locations at a later time as an index of their learning abilities. Yoder hopes that his spatial learning model will help increase understanding of the brain mechanisms that underlie general memory functions. In his classes and in his lab, Yoder hopes to be able to have the same impact on his students that his own undergraduate mentor had on him.

In his research lab, Ryan Yoder, Ph.D., observes a mouse learning to find food on the radial arm maze.

Psi Chi Adds 40 New Members

The IPFW chapter of Psi Chi inducted 40 new members this spring. Psi Chi, the international honor society in psychology, selects students who have met the following minimum criteria:

- 3.0 cumulative GPA
- 3.0 psychology GPA
- Nine credit hours of psychology courses

Congratulations, psychology majors and minors:

- Ericka Anderson
- Jennifer Baatz
- Tyler Borsa
- Natalie Bruick
- Megan Colchin
- Lace Conwell
- Nicole Corey
- Brent Driver
- Jennifer Dumford
- Claire Enstrom
- Jerry Ethier III
- Alexandra Forsyth
- Katrina George
- Corin Geyer
- Jessica Godfrey
- Amanda Gotschall
- Amanda Graff
- Kayleigh Gunter
- Paula Hochstetler
- Stephanie John
- Kristin Johnson
- Janelle Keefer
- Amber King
- Anna Magnuson
- Kristen McFadden
- Emily Meller
- Kara Miller
- Luke Miller
- Thomas Petersen
- Samantha Raffieed
- Jonathon Romano
- Karah Thieme
- Andzela Zilka

Megan Rondot
- Brittany Roy
- Colleen Schulte
- Christina Sorenson
- Julie Stills
- Curtis Terry III
Chair’s Comments

Welcome to our “new look” department newsletter, with more feature stories on current students, alumni, and faculty. I am using my first chair’s column to highlight an issue that has begun to attract national attention: the view held by many students and even some practitioners in the field that psychology is not a real science.

It often comes as a surprise to students that psychology is considered a science. Although psychology students dutifully learn about the scientific method, beginning with their introductory psychology class, a recent study suggests that they graduate no more convinced than when they started that psychology is a science. Students who are interested in a mental health career often think that, as practitioners, they will not need to bother with the scientific method and that expertise will be acquired through further training and first-hand experience.

Hold on! Let’s change this scenario slightly. Suppose you have a medical illness and go to a doctor who has been trained in bloodletting. The doctor recalls past patients who have gotten well after this treatment, although it is also true that others have died. Perhaps you would have consented to the treatment more than a century ago, but today you would most likely run for the nearest exit. We now expect doctors to recommend treatments shown scientifically to produce the best outcomes (although even in medicine, this occurs less often than we might wish).

Why has there not been a similar shift in the field of psychology to treatments based only on scientific evidence? Although there are many treatments for which effectiveness has been established (e.g., cognitive behavior therapy for depression), treatment decisions are often based on practitioners’ own “evidence” acquired through experience with other clients. As noted by the authors of a review article on the current status of clinical psychology, change can occur through more rigorous and scientifically based training at the graduate level. But there must also be a shift in how students view psychology at the undergraduate level. How can we help students to truly accept psychology as both an experimental and applied science? I welcome your thoughts on this topic, and I would be happy to provide references for further reading. Please contact me by email at lawton@ipfw.edu.

Program Review Means Positive Changes for Our Students

Socrates is credited with saying that “the unexamined life is not worth living.” At IPFW, academic programs live by a similar sentiment, through something known as “program review.” Every seven years, academic programs are to conduct an intensive, comprehensive self-study with the goal of identifying program strengths and weaknesses, and an action plan for continuous development and improvement. The Department of Psychology is presently undergoing program review.

The program review process is typically a yearlong endeavor, and here in psychology, all faculty contribute to the process, which is overseen by the Office of Academic Affairs. The first step is to identify specific questions for self-study (e.g., about departmental mission, goals, assessment practices, curricular issues, student and faculty experiences/satisfaction, etc.) and collect data to address the identified questions. Then the data are analyzed to arrive at conclusions and recommendations for action. So essentially, program review is a form of research. In the past year, the faculty created a report that will first be reviewed by a committee of university colleagues from other departments and will then be reviewed by a group of colleagues from psychology departments at other universities.

The current program review is our second one—the first was conducted in 2002–03. Four major outcomes of that first review process were the development of a proposal for a graduate program (which, although regarded favorably by the administration and certainly in demand by our students, was abandoned due to a lack of resources for the program), the development of PSY 10000 - Introduction to the Science and Fields of Psychology (or “Intro to the Major”), a restructuring of the psychology major curriculum, and the hiring of a second department secretary (dedicated primarily to handling student records). Some of the issues we are investigating in our current review process are the effectiveness of the PSY 10000
No Excuses—Get Involved!

During her time at IPFW, psychology major Emily Meller never used the excuse, “my dog ate my homework.” She could have tried to use this excuse; after all, dogs rule her life. A more appropriate “dog” expression would be that she “worked doggedly” to get the most out of her college experience. In April, the psychology department honored her hard work with a Senior Excellence in Psychology Award.

In addition to her achievements in the classroom, what made Meller even more of a standout was her active involvement in almost all of the experiential opportunities offered within the psychology department. Meller shared the following highlights from these experiences.

PSY 49000 Practicum in Psychotherapy—Because of Meller’s interest in therapy, this was her favorite psychology class. She especially enjoyed the role-playing. “Usually in class you just talk about the subject, but in this class you actually get to experience it firsthand. Each student had to be the patient once and the therapist once. We then watched the tape and analyzed how we did.”

PSY 48000 Field Experience in Psychology—Meller participated in not just one, but two field experiences. Her first field experience setting was at Parkview Behavioral Health, where she was “able to actually see the pathology in person.” Her second field experience setting was at IPFW Health and Wellness, where she really enjoyed assisting with assessments at IPFW’s Mental Health Day.

PSY 49600 Readings & Research in Psychology—For four semesters, Meller was a research assistant for Carol Lawton, Ph.D. “It was so interesting to see how the research is done from start to finish.” Because Meller contributed extensively to a project on virtual navigation, she was a co-author on a poster presentation about the project at the annual convention of the Association for Psychological Science in Washington, D.C., in May. She also presented this work at the IPFW Undergraduate Research and Creative Endeavor Symposium in April.

Meller admits that most of these experiences occurred during her last two years at IPFW. “I became more involved because I began to consider graduate school. I thought that taking advantage of these opportunities would help me narrow down what I would like to pursue in the future.” Meller’s advice to psychology students is to get involved early. “There are a lot of great opportunities the psychology department has to offer you which not only look good for graduate school, but also provide you with hands-on experience in the professional world of psychology.”

Michael Bendele, Ph.D., left, is one of the professors who teaches PSY 10000 (Intro to the Major), the effectiveness of which is being assessed during this year’s program review.

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News from Our Alumni

Chase Allen (B.A. ’09) has been admitted to the master’s program in counseling and educational psychology at Indiana University. He is excited about starting graduate work this fall and credits his faculty advisor’s guidance and instruction as being instrumental in his new educational endeavor.

Ryan Boyd (B.A. ’10) is a Ph.D. student in the health/social psychology program at North Dakota State University. In his first year, he has done collaborative research pertaining to cognition, self-regulation, language constructs, interpersonal approach/avoidance paradigms, embodied cognition, and political affiliation/motivation. He shares that the lab is “outstandingly fast-paced; we run three new studies per week, so I’ve had a lot of freedom to try some extremely interesting ideas over a wide breadth of research areas.” Ryan has had a first-author manuscript accepted at the Journal of Experimental Social Psychology.

Kristine (Jehle) DiScala (B.A. ’03) passed the Examination for Professional Practice of Psychology and is a licensed psychologist with a health service provider in psychology endorsement. In fall 2010, she returned to IPFW as a presenter for the psychology department’s Colloquium Series and spoke on “What Really Happens in Therapy: Behind the Door of an Interpersonal Process Therapist.”

Joshua Fiechter (B.A. ’09) is working on publishing his honors thesis, which examines the effect of humorous test items.

Stephanie (McIntosh) Wilkie, a Fort Wayne native, received a B.A. in psychology from IPFW in 1992, an M.A. in psychology from Ball State University, and a Ph.D. in educational psychology from Indiana University. Her first job took her to the Research Triangle region of North Carolina, where she worked as a research analyst. This job involved large-scale survey work for the U.S. Department of Education, with hands-on experience in web-survey design and data cleaning. Though Wilkie enjoyed the challenge, she discovered that the corporate life was not for her—plus she was still searching for a place to call home.

After some contemplation about what she wanted in her life, Wilkie decided she would like to return to a university setting to teach and pursue her research interests. She also decided to fulfill one of her lifelong dreams—living abroad. These two decisions turned out to be a significant factor in finding her “home, sweet home.”

In 2004, she flew across the pond to interview for a teaching position at the University of Sunderland in northeast England. Wilkie accepted the position and has been a senior lecturer in psychology for seven years. One of her favorite classes to teach is Research Methods and Statistics, in which she actually uses a textbook written by IPFW psychology professors, Ken Bordens, Ph.D., and Bruce Abbott, Ph.D.

“My aim is to teach the students how to be good consumers of information, even if they don’t intend to pursue a research degree later.

One of the reasons that Wilkie loves her home in northern England is because she can work while overlooking this river from her office window where there are small, brightly colored fishing boats and seagulls. Her office is in the tan building above the first fishing boat.

“Wilkie’s own enjoyment of her research methods and statistics courses at IPFW had led her to focus her Ph.D. on research methodology and statistics.

One of her research interests is the concept of home. “Home is a commonplace term, both in everyday language and in environmental psychology research literature linking people and places,” Wilkie states. However, it is not yet known what psychological factors contribute to the identification of a particular place as “home.” Wilkie is currently focused on exploring how home is defined and how it relates to the concepts of place identity and place attachment.

Wilkie had never been to northern England prior to her interview, yet she knew instantly she had found her home. “I literally just knew it was the place I was going to live, even before I was offered the job,” she said.

“It’s a hard thing to describe really, but in environmental psychology literature, it is referred to as place congruence; in other words, finding a place that just seems to fit who you are. For some reason, I instantly felt like it was a place that I had already been for many years.” One area that Wilkie definitely does not have to research anymore is a place to call her own home!
on reading comprehension performance. He is also working with Priti Shah at the University of Michigan on her graph comprehension research.

Jenna Harmon (B.A. '09) is pursuing Master of Science and Education Specialist degrees at the University of Dayton to become a nationally certified school psychologist. She has an external graduate assistantship with ReadySetSoar, which is the greater Dayton region’s early childhood initiative.

Melissa (Johnson) Helmsing (B.A. '99) has returned to IPFW and is now employed as the training and new parents program administrator in Human Resources. She has been working in the field of human resources for five years. Melissa and her husband John (B.S. '95) have two children.

Alicia A. (Tomlinson) Johnson (B.A. '10) was promoted to rehabilitation coordinator at the Bowen Center in Columbia City. She is now responsible for all the assessments, treatment planning, and coordination of care for clients receiving rehabilitation services in Whitley County. She enjoys her job and is happy to be working in the same field in which she acquired her education.

Susan Johnston (B.A. '10) began her graduate studies in the marriage and family counselor education program at IPFW in fall 2010. During this time, she has been a graduate teaching aide for the large section of PSY 12000. She enjoys helping the Psychology 12000 students and working on departmental research project to improve student success in the course.

Levi Laskowski (B.A. '09) is a first-year master’s student in the counseling department at Ball State University. He will be interning at the Ball State Counseling Center in the fall. He is also co-president of Continuum, a LGBT graduate student organization, which is working to establish a mentorship program to provide advice and counsel to undergraduates who identify as LGBT.

Joel Sprunger (B.A. ’10; Research Certificate ’10) will begin his graduate coursework in the Ph.D. clinical psychology program at Purdue University this fall. He received a half-time teaching assistantship, tuition remission, and a stipend and will be working in Purdue’s Intimate Partner Violence Lab.

Rachel (Kiser) Thomas (B.A. '10) is working as an administrative assistant at the Goshen Veteran’s Clinic, while she takes coursework for her Master of Theology from Bethel College. She reports that she has written a lot of papers, but admits that all of the writing she did for her psychology classes “really prepared me more than I would have expected.” She and her husband, Chris, have also started a new church, River of Freedom, in Angola.

Omicron-Psi Inductees

On April 18, three current psychology students and two alumni were inducted into Omicron-Psi, a national honor society that recognizes the achievements of nontraditional and returning adult students. To become members of Omicron-Psi, these individuals met all of the following criteria:

- GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Junior status or above
- At least 24 years old
- Past or current involvement in three or more community/school organizations

Kudos to

Ericka Anderson
Michelle Getz (B.A. '09)
Alyssa Peting
Jennifer Smith (A.A. '09)
Tabatha Winters

Yukti (Ahuja) Singh (B.A. ’95) authored Two Possibilities: A Journey We Traveled Alone and is working on her second book. She states that her writing abilities were first developed within the psychology department, where she was taught “step-by-step how to write a psychology paper.” Singh owns and operates a preschool/kindergarten center in San Jose, Calif., and is currently pursuing her master’s in counseling psychology at Santa Clara University.

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Jason Rose (B.A. '02) continues to teach as an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Toledo. This spring, he returned to IPFW as a presenter for the psychology department’s Colloquium Series and spoke on “Social Norm Comparisons and Worry.”

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Elise Minick (B.A. ’10) is enrolled in the school psychology program at Kent State University and will earn a Master of Education in August. She will then matriculate into the education specialist degree, which involves one year of coursework and one year of internship.

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2010–11 Psychology Awards

Chase Allen (B.A. ’09) has been admitted to the master’s program in counseling and educational psychology at Indiana University–Purdue University Fort Wayne. He has served as a research assistant for the psychology department at IPFW and has also been involved in other service projects. He has been very active both in the classroom and as a research assistant. He plans to pursue his goals in the field of psychology.

Stephanie (Melinda) Wilkie, a Fort Wayne native, received a Senior Excellence in Psychology Scholarship. She is a graduating senior who has shown academic excellence as well as involvement in both academic and campus/community service. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. In fall 2010, she participated in field experience in research and was named to the Responsible Citizen of the Year by the IPFW chapter of Psi Chi. She has been an outstanding research assistant, teaching assistant, and consultant with a college athletic department.

Alexandra Forsyth (B.A. ’09) has been accepted to graduate school in environmental psychology at North Dakota State University. In her senior research, she studied the effect of humorous test items on students’ responses. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. She was honored for her roles as a military psychiatrist in the Army Medical Corps. In May, she graduated from IPFW with a B.A. in psychology and is working on pursuing her goals in the field of psychology.

Kristine (Jehle) DiScala (B.A. ’03) has been admitted to the Ph.D. program in clinical psychology. She has served as a research assistant for the psychology department at IPFW and has been involved in other service projects. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. In fall 2010, she participated in field experience in research and was named to the Responsible Citizen of the Year by the IPFW chapter of Psi Chi. She has been an outstanding research assistant, teaching assistant, and consultant with a college athletic department.

Emily Meller (B.A. ’09) has been honored for her roles as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and Psi Chi president, as well as being a standout in the classroom. She plans to pursue her goals in the field of psychology.

Kevin Crombie (B.A. ’10) has been honored for his roles as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and major in the health/social psychology program in clinical psychology. He plans to attend medical school.

Lahman was commisioned a second lieutenant and will be serving in the Army National Guard. He practices as a psychologist with a health service provider in Washington, D.C. He has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. He was honored for his outstanding performance in the classroom and her role as a research assistant. She has been very active in the theatre department and plans on pursuing her goals in the entertainment field—both on and behind the camera.

A Place to Call Home

3

Wilkie, a Fort Wayne native, received a Senior Psychology Award. She is a graduating senior who has shown academic excellence as well as involvement in both academic and campus/community service. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. In fall 2010, she participated in field experience in research and was named to the Responsible Citizen of the Year by the IPFW chapter of Psi Chi. She has been an outstanding research assistant, teaching assistant, and consultant with a college athletic department.

Kenneth Lahman (2) was honored for his excellence in the classroom and as a research assistant. He plans to pursue his goals in the field of psychology.

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A Place to Call Home

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Wilkie, a Fort Wayne native, received a Senior Psychology Award. She is a graduating senior who has shown academic excellence as well as involvement in both academic and campus/community service. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. In fall 2010, she participated in field experience in research and was named to the Responsible Citizen of the Year by the IPFW chapter of Psi Chi. She has been an outstanding research assistant, teaching assistant, and consultant with a college athletic department.

Kenneth Lahman (2) was honored for his excellence in the classroom and as a research assistant. He plans to pursue his goals in the field of psychology.

Emily Meller (5) has been honored for her roles as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and Psi Chi president, as well as being a standout in the classroom. She plans to pursue her goals in the field of psychology.

Kristine (Jehle) DiScala (B.A. ’03) has been admitted to the Ph.D. program in clinical psychology. She has served as a research assistant for the psychology department at IPFW and has been involved in other service projects. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. In fall 2010, she participated in field experience in research and was named to the Responsible Citizen of the Year by the IPFW chapter of Psi Chi. She has been an outstanding research assistant, teaching assistant, and consultant with a college athletic department.

Alexandra Forsyth (B.A. ’09) has been accepted to graduate school in environmental psychology at North Dakota State University. In her senior research, she studied the effect of humorous test items on students’ responses. She has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. She was honored for her roles as a military psychiatrist in the Army Medical Corps. In May, she graduated from IPFW with a B.A. in psychology and is working on pursuing her goals in the field of psychology.

Emily Meller (B.A. ’09) has been honored for her roles as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and Psi Chi president, as well as being a standout in the classroom. She plans to pursue her goals in the field of psychology.

Kevin Crombie (B.A. ’10) has been honored for his roles as a teaching assistant, research assistant, and major in the health/social psychology program in clinical psychology. He plans to attend medical school.

Lahman was commisioned a second lieutenant and will be serving in the Army National Guard. He practices as a psychologist with a health service provider in Washington, D.C. He has been an outstanding psychology major for use in the psychology endorsement. He was honored for his outstanding performance in the classroom and her role as a research assistant. She has been very active in the theatre department and plans on pursuing her goals in the entertainment field—both on and behind the camera.
News from Our Faculty

Bruce Abbott, Ph.D., will be starting partial retirement this year. He will teach during the fall semester each year.

Michael Bendele, Ph.D., was inducted into FACET (Faculty Colloquium on Excellence in Teaching), which is a community of faculty dedicated to recognizing and promoting excellence in teaching at IU campuses across the state. Bendele also was a co-recipient of the Bruening Advising Award from the College of Arts and Sciences for his work in advising psychology students on academic probation.

Elaine Blakemore, Ph.D., received the Downs-Hollander Service Award from the College of Arts and Sciences. Also, her recently published book, Gender Development, was used as a source for the New York Times best seller, Cinderella Ate My Daughter, which explores how the “princess” culture affects the development of girls.

Thomas Blakemore, Ph.D., has been appointed as a visiting instructor in psychology for the next three years.

Jeanne DiClementi, Ph.D., has been appointed the first IPFW director of research compliance. She also has been appointed chair of the social sciences Institutional Review Board at Purdue West Lafayette.

DiClementi recently established the Resource Center at IPFW to provide support services to students who identify as LGBTQ.

Daniel Miller, Ph.D., has been tenured and promoted to associate professor of psychology.

Lesa Rae Vartanian, Ph.D., received the Teacher of the Year Award from the IPFW chapter of Sigma Xi. Sigma Xi is a professional society for scientists across disciplines. She presented a talk at IPFW’s Sigma Xi Annual Banquet on her involvement of psychology undergraduate teaching assistants in research about teaching. Vartanian also was a co-recipient of the Bruening Advising Award from the College of Arts and Sciences for her work in advising psychology students on academic probation.

In addition, the following faculty have published or presented their research in 2010: Michael Bendele, Ph.D., Elaine Blakemore, Ph.D., Kenneth Bordens, Ph.D., Jeannie DiClementi, Ph.D., Michelle Drouin, Ph.D., Craig Hill, Ph.D., Jay Jackson, Ph.D., Brenda Lundy, Ph.D., Daniel Miller, Ph.D., Jody Ross, Ph.D., and Lesa Rae Vartanian, Ph.D.

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The Texting Phenomenon: *wot r we doin?*

About 10 years ago, while living in England, some friends convinced Michelle Drouin, Ph.D., that she absolutely needed a “mobile phone.” How else would they get in touch with her? Although she felt that her home phone (“landline”) would be sufficient for communication, she reluctantly agreed to enter the mobile world. Drouin’s entry into this world was uneventful; she learned the technology with relative ease and was generally able to decipher any textisms (abbreviations used in text messages) without problems. However, nearly a decade later, she is sometimes stumped by the language she sees in text messages. What, for example, does “kk” mean, and how often are people using it? And she is also perplexed about why some people use these abbreviations and others don’t.

These questions have served as a basis for Drouin’s recent research into texting and Facebook communication. One of her interesting findings is that students’ reported text messaging frequency and the use of textisms are significantly related with literacy. Her next step in this research line is to examine what people are actually texting and how that relates to their literacy skills. Additionally, Drouin has found that students are using a lot of textisms in their text messages: in a sample of about 2,000 messages, nearly one in every five words is a textism. Her next step in this investigation is to measure the textism frequency in Facebook messages and to also examine the personality and literacy characteristics that distinguish those who use textisms frequently from those who use them infrequently.

Drouin has many other studies related to Facebook and texting that are in progress, but she will not give away all of her secrets yet. Instead, Drouin will do what she always jokes about doing in her classes … leave you on the edge of your seat.