

Greetings from the

# Psychology Department

at Truman State University!

Much has happened since our last newsletter. First, I want to thank everyone who took our alumni survey. Over 200 alumni were able to find time to tell us about their

**Happy Spring** from the Psychology Department at Truman State University! After our blizzard and the historic cancelling of classes for 48 hours, we were all quite happy to return to classes.

current activities and evaluate their Truman experience. Members of my research team are busy compiling the responses, and we hope to feature, among other things, your suggestions to students on our departmental website. Thank you for your responses, especially sharing your Truman memories and giving us suggestions for further strengthening our program! Also, a big thank you to those of you who have listed your information at our webpage (<http://psychology.truman.edu>). I have referred both prospective and current students to this page to see the things that our alumni *really* end up doing with their Truman psychology degree. Our faculty members are also enjoying reading about your accomplishments!

Second, we held recently the first Psychology Alumni Reunion Event. In response

to our inaugural newsletter, a number of you asked to hear more about the current research of our students and faculty. All eleven of our current full-time faculty members mentor teams of research students, many doing multiple research projects. In addition, a number of students complete independent, mentored projects with faculty. We thought the best way for you to really hear about our research and the wonderful things our students are doing would be through a campus visit. On Friday, we had several opportunities to interact with our faculty and current students, including joining Sal Costa for his General Psychology class, taking a campus tour, having lunch with current students, attending faculty and alumni lectures by Dr. Michele Breault and Michael Schwend (class of 1983 and CEO of Preferred Family Healthcare). We ended the day with a Ronza reception at which over thirty alumni, friends, and faculty members had an awesome time reminiscing and reconnecting. We also scheduled the event to coincide with the annual Psi Chi Research Conference, and a number of alumni were able to stay for this event and the luncheon afterwards. We hope to hold another alumni reunion event next Spring.

In other big news, Dr. James (Jim) Tichenor, who has been teaching in our department since the late 1960s, retired and received emeritus status

at December's commencement. Fortunately for us, Jim chose the new "Phase-out" retirement, so he will return each Fall semester for the next three years to teach his beloved Behavior Modification and Psychopathology of Childhood classes. In the meantime, we are planning something special to honor Jim for his years of service and the incredible impact he has had on our students through the years. Shh, it's a surprise though.

We have created the Dr. James Tichenor Honorary Fund with a goal of raising \$50,000 by the time Jim really leaves us (i.e., December 2013). This money would be partly used to name a classroom after Jim. Imagine, a permanent physical reminder on our campus of the impact Dr. Tichenor had on our students and our department! In addition, we hope to create an endowed scholarship in Jim's name because we know of his great love for our students. In this edition, we feature stories focusing on how our current students spend their summers. In the Faculty Spotlight, we focus on Dr. Fred Shaffer, who has been at Truman since 1975. Many of you may recall Dr. Shaffer's physiological psychology and biofeedback courses. In our Alumni focus, we interviewed a 1976 graduate, Dr. James Judd, superintendent of the Fayette R-III school district.

# Faculty Spotlight: Dr. Fred Shaffer

An Interview with: Aaron "Bama" Truitt  
Senior psychology major from the St. Louis area

**N**ote: Dr. Shaffer has been at Truman since 1975. He holds a bachelor degree in psychology and political science from Claremont Men's College and a master degree in clinical psychology and doctorate in social-personality psychology from Oklahoma State University. He is a Senior Fellow of the Biofeedback Certification International Alliance and is serving as their current chair. Dr. Shaffer is also serving as editor for two biofeedback journals.



**Q.** What attracted you to teaching at Truman?

**A.** I was almost finished with my PhD at Oklahoma State and had no idea what Northeast Missouri State University would be like. I didn't care because it was my first job. My mentor said "try it out for 3 years, and if it doesn't work out, look for your next position." In 1975, I found a regional party school with an unrealized potential for greatness.

**Q.** How have the university, its students, and the psychology department changed since you first started working here?

**A.** Truman is now a highly selective liberal arts and sciences university that has earned its national rankings. Our students are among the best in the nation and can easily compete with their Ivy League counterparts. When I came to Truman, Psychology had four faculty members. Since that time, we have hired exceptional faculty who have helped us to expand our curriculum and supervise student research. We offer one of the most rigorous psychology majors in the Midwest and we do a superb job of preparing our students for graduate school. Our alumni report that they can easily compete against their classmates from private colleges, whose education cost four times as much. We have grown into one of the finest public liberal arts and sciences institutions in the Midwest.

**Q.** What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

**A.** There are two reasons that I would pay to teach psychology at Truman. First, our students are amazing! They show incredible potential. They are intellectually alive. They grapple with the great questions, like "What does it mean to be human?" Their excitement about learning reinforces my own passion as a teacher. Frequently, their questions help me deepen my understanding of psychology. The second reason is my research team. One of Truman's greatest strengths is its involvement of undergraduates in research from their freshman year. My Applied Psychophysiology research team consists of about 40 students. Their passion and investment in our studies inspire me! This is a student-run team. Chris Wally and Jordan Fuller manage our shift leaders and supervise the day-to-day operations of our team. Our students develop researchable questions, improve designs that I've sketched out, and routinely solve technical problems by themselves. You can see a big smile on their faces when their contribution improves a study or when their findings are cited in professional workshops. I burst at the seams with pride when our students deliver polished presentations at national and international professional meetings.

**Q.** What is your team currently studying?

**A.** We've studied breathing and heart rate variability over the last 20+ years. Heart rate variability is the change in heart rate across the breathing cycle. In healthy individuals, the heart rate speeds as we inhale and slows as we exhale.

A healthy heart is not a metronome that beats at a steady 75 beats per minute; that describes a damaged heart. Our team tackles applied questions to help clinicians treat their patients using biofeedback. Biofeedback is a training process in which skilled professionals teach clients how to control their physiological responses to improve their health and performance using instruments that immediately display their progress back to them. Biofeedback is like learning to throw darts while wearing a blindfold. Biofeedback, by showing us our performance like our breathing pattern or heart rate, removes that blindfold.

What has your team discovered over the last 35 years?

(Here is a sampling of our findings.)

- Single-strap messenger bags produce greater muscular imbalance than double-strap backpacks.
- Patient talking while a nurse measures blood pressure raises systolic and diastolic pressures, and heart rate.
- Tight designer jeans can produce more shallow and rapid breathing, and reduce the percentage of carbon dioxide in the bloodstream below desirable levels.
- Chanting "om," singing vowels like "a," "e," and "u," throat singing, and ujjayi breathing can raise heart rate variability.
- Exhaling twice as long as inhaling produces greater heart rate variability than exhaling for the same amount of time.

- Breathing at 6 breaths per minute lowers systolic blood pressure compared with breathing at 12 breaths per minute.
- Four weeks of heart rate variability training can lower the stress hormone cortisol as well as C-reactive protein, which is an inflammatory marker that is implicated in heart disease.
- Finally, the breathing rate that maximizes heart rate variability, which is called the resonance frequency, is stable over 2 weeks.

To see the full text of this interview, along with answers to other questions, such as those listed below, please go to <http://psychology.truman.edu/newsletter.asp>.

- When you aren't working hard for Truman and its students, what are you doing?
- Have you kept in contact with any former students?

# Gift Update

As Dr. Shaffer noted in the prior article, with dwindling state support, the university has really shifted from being state-funded to state-supported. In 1985-1986, state support represented 72% of our total budget. By 2009-2010, that percentage had dropped to 49%. With state cuts in appropriations in the past year, coupled with the deeper cuts expected in the upcoming year's fiscal's budget, the percentage will be approaching 40%. When the university's budget is cut, so too is our departmental budget. As a result, gifts to the Psychology Department Fund are much appreciated as they allow us to continue to fund such things as student travel to conferences. The Psychology Department Fund was created in 2008, and we received donations from two donors in our first year for a total of \$40. That number grew to twelve donors in 2010 for a gift

total of \$1,770. We also witnessed the creation of the Dr. Shawn Bergman Psychology Research Fund (see our prior newsletter for more information on this fund) in 2009 to support the research activities of Dr. Shaffer and his research team. This year, a new fund, the Dr. James Tichenor Honorary Fund has been created to honor a former teacher, mentor, friend, and colleague. Donations to the Psychology Department Fund this year have already surpassed the level of giving in prior years. Thank you to everyone who has given to our various funds! If you still want to make a gift this year, you can contribute by contacting Truman's Advancement staff at 800-452-6678 or online, by designating Psychology as the Academic Department, at [https://secure.truman.edu/alumni-s/contribution\\_new.asp](https://secure.truman.edu/alumni-s/contribution_new.asp).

## Dr. Shaffer's Gift

As state support for higher education continues to diminish at a rapid rate, Dr. Shaffer is helping preserve the transformational experiences that have become a distinctive part of a Truman education. "The reduction in state funding has convinced me of the need to protect our support for our students," he states. Dr. Shaffer provides loyal support with annual gifts to the Truman State University Foundation; however, current budget conditions have motivated him to also support Truman through a substantial planned gift commitment of \$363,000. "I want to support students majoring in psychology to be able to travel to research conferences and to study abroad," he explains. "My estate can help support activities like research and study abroad that contribute to Truman's excellence."

A planned gift commitment through a combination of a bequest in his will and designating Truman as the beneficiary of life insurance will establish two important funds. The Dr. Erik Peper Research Fund will provide support for student travel to research conferences. It also honors one of Dr. Shaffer's first mentors in biofeedback and the three decades of collaboration between Dr. Peper and Dr. Shaffer's research team. The Donald and Nancy Moss Study Abroad Scholarship is inspired by Donald and Nancy's extensive international travel and generous support for Dr. Shaffer's students at international conferences. This fund will provide greater access to study-abroad experiences for psychology students.

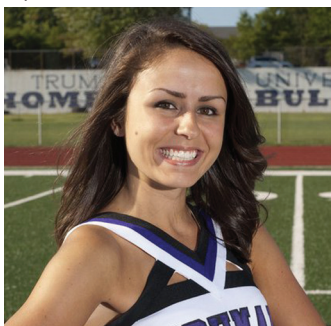
Through this generous gift commitment, Dr. Shaffer is demonstrating his concern for Truman's future while further elevating the University to the status of a family member. "The two planned gifts have given me the peace of mind that I have helped to look after future generations of Truman students," he humbly states.

## Summer 2010: Activities

### How do our psychology students spend their summers?

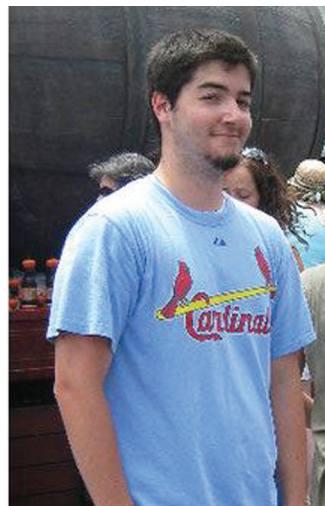
#### At Internships

In summer 2010, 22 of our psychology students earned credit for internships in psychology. Professor Sal Costa, assistant professor of psychology, facilitates and supervises



Jenny Schwend, a senior psychology major from Kirksville, Missouri participated in the department's internship program during the summer of 2010. Being interested in I/O psychology, she completed a Human Resources (HR) internship at Preferred Family Healthcare's (PFH) administration site. Her main job duties were to assist the HR department with various projects and daily tasks. One of the biggest projects

she helped work on during her time at PFH involved researching and developing proposed salary ranges for all clinical and administration staff. This was a long process and involved developing and sending out compensation surveys and researching salary information within the state of Missouri. She also had the privilege of traveling to some of the different job sites in order to assist a coworker with employee focus groups which were employee interviews focusing on job satisfaction, training needs, employee morale, supervisor ratings, and suggestions for workplace improvement. Some of her other daily tasks included managing employee personnel and medical files and entering training into the computer system. In addition to the work experience, there were some school components that Jenny had to complete as well. This included a reflective paper on her experience and several reviews of journal articles that related to her internship field of study. Overall, she said it was a great experience and definitely recommends the internship program to all undergraduate psychology majors.



#### Taking Classes

In summer 2010, Truman's department of psychology offered eighteen classes. Most of these courses are now offered online, as many students choose to return to their home communities for the summer months. Our students also appreciate the flexibility of online offerings which allow a student to

"schedule" her or his class around other summer activities, such as jobs and vacations. While Professor Sal Costa continues to offer classes on campus, Drs. Shaffer, Vittengl, Hatala, Conner, Breault, and Heckert offer classes online.

Greg Cejas, a junior psychology pre-med major from the St. Louis area, had this to say about his summer online psychology class experience... Over this past summer I registered for the online version of Motivation and Emotion, a class taught by Dr. Teresa Heckert. When I signed up for it I was expecting the stereotypical format that some online classes follow; a few papers and a couple of tests due by the end of the course. I was surprised to find this to not be the case. Instead we had to take part in service learning, where the students participate in some form of community service and apply the concepts learned in the class to their experiences by writing detailed journal entries. Mine took place at Delmar Gardens South, a retirement community in South St. Louis, Missouri. Though I had my misgivings about the process at first,

by the end of the course I realized just how applicable the concepts were to the work being done there. I found that I better understood why the staff and residents worked and behaved the way that they did. It's one thing to learn out of a textbook by itself, but it's an entirely more rewarding experience to take what you learn in a class and apply it to the real world. In many ways, this online course ended up being just as, if not more, rewarding than the brick and mortar classes that I've experienced. If online courses are the way of the future, then service learning should certainly play a part in it

## Conducting Research

In summer 2010, Truman offered the first summer research grants to students under a newly developed program called TruScholars. Three psychology students received these competitive grants to conduct their own, mentored research. To learn more about this program, please visit <http://osr.truman.edu>.

Peter Ruberton, a senior psychology major from St. Louis, participated in the inaugural year of the TruScholars program. Here is what he had to say about the experience; "I had

the privilege of participating in the first year of the TruScholars Summer Research Program last summer, for which I received a \$3000 grant to conduct an independent research project in psychology. Under the supervision of my faculty mentor, Dr. Jeffrey Vittengl, I studied the effects of gratitude reflection ("counting one's blessings") on one's well-being and perception of positive and negative life events. I found that while gratitude reflection does not provide any sustained improvements to well-being, it can improve positive mood immediately when one does it. Furthermore, participants who regularly performed a gratitude reflection exercise perceived positive events in their lives more

intensely than participants who performed the control exercise. The study helped me learn the principles of psychological research as well as the current research on well-being, which I hope to continue studying in graduate school this fall. As part of the TruScholars program, I also had the opportunity to learn about the kinds of research projects done by students in other disciplines and to present my findings at the TruScholars Symposium last August. I am—appropriately enough—extremely grateful to TruScholars, Dr. Vittengl, and the Psychology Department for their support in this challenging and exciting process."

# Clair Reynolds: Studying Abroad in Ireland

An Interview with: Kayla Maassen

Sophomore psychology major from Jefferson City, Missouri

**N**ote: Clair is a junior psychology and political science major from Paxton, Illinois. She plans to pursue a Ph.D. in industrial/organizational psychology after graduating from Truman.



**Q.** *Where did you go for your study abroad trip?*

I studied abroad in Ireland over the summer, attending the National University of Ireland in Galway for five weeks. A few of these classes were Irish Society and Irish Literature and Film.

**Q.** *What did you do while in Ireland?*

I was able to explore Ireland while there. For example, there were planned field trips in Literature and Film. We visited different areas of Ireland that related to Irish literature and culture. Our class also visited the Aran Islands where we learned about older Irish culture and were exposed to the Gaelic language. We enjoyed eating foods such as toasties (grilled cheese from a pub), lamb, seafood, or soup. We did

get a taste of home on the Fourth of July when barbeque was made for us, with fireworks on the TV and patriotic songs playing.

**Q.** *What was the culture like?*

In my Literature and Film class, a lot of movies were shown. These movies are popular in Ireland and very good, but unfamiliar in America. The Irish love the Americans. When we walked into a pub, they would come talk to us and ask questions about America. The difference in the size of the countries could be seen through these interactions. They would ask about Boston or New York and not realize that people from America may not have seen these places before. It comes from the size difference. In Ireland, a person can drive to just about any point within five hours; it is normal to more easily see every big

city in the country. For this reason, some might ask me if I knew their relatives that had moved to a city in Mississippi. They would tell me the road their relative lived on and ask if I knew them. I also saw the long history in Ireland. I was able to visit a Viking village from the 1100s. It was still standing. Their history is like nothing in the United States; it goes back much farther. It took time to become used to the different culture when I first got to Ireland. The behavior is different there. The people are not as loud and they take their time, even at McDonalds. After my five weeks in Ireland, I also spent two weeks travelling around mainland Europe. I went to many countries in this time, including Germany, Austria, Italy, France, and England. This was different from being in Ireland because I saw only the big tourist attractions, such as the Coliseum, and not as many of the smaller,

cultural things. It was also different because the language was different, and changed when I went to the different countries. It was my first time being in a "non-English world". It was sometimes challenging to keep track of what language was being spoken.

**Q.** *Are you glad you studied abroad?*

I would highly recommend studying abroad; I am glad I did it. After this experience, I have changed in subtle ways. It was probably the best time I ever had.

# Alumni Profile: Dr. James "Jim" Judd

An Interview with: Katie Judd

Senior psychology major from  
Lexington Missouri



**Q.** What have been your most recent accomplishments?

**A.** Although not professional accomplishments, being married to a wonderful woman and having great children are extremely rewarding. Bringing the budget balances back to acceptable levels is important, and improving student achievement, of course, is a very good accomplishment, but that's done by a lot of people, not just me. The last two districts I worked in were provisionally accredited when I got there and they were both accredited with distinction when I left and that's attributable to all kinds of folks doing a lot of hard work. Overall, I think the greatest accomplishments are the relationships built with the kids. That's always most important. The rest of those things don't matter if you don't take time to get to know the kids and know you've made a difference to them.

**Q.** What was your favorite part about being a Psychology major?

**A.** I enjoyed the professors who were working with the program at the time, and that included not only the psychology folks, but the Educational Psychology staff as well. Jim Tichenor, Jim Lyons and Sal Costa were there, of course, and also, Bob Cowan, Lonnie Morrow, and both the Martins. They were all very instrumental in my education. I enjoyed working with those teachers because they treated you as an equal and not just as another number in the computer. I think that was probably the most enjoyable part, getting to work with those people.

**N**ote: Dr. James "Jim" Judd graduated from Truman (then Northeast Missouri) in 1976 with a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology. He has since earned a Masters degree in school psychology from Truman, an Ed.D. from University of Arizona-Tucson, and a Specialist Degree in Educational Leadership and Administration from Drake University. Jim is the superintendent of the Fayette R-III School District in Fayette, Missouri. In the past, he has worked as a practicing psychologist and continues to practice privately on an as-needed basis. Jim is currently the President-Elect of the Northeast Missouri Association of School Administrators and has served on a number of state-wide boards and national advisory groups. He has received national acclaim for leadership from the American Association of School Administrators and has been recognized by Who's Who among American Business Leaders and Who's Who among American School Leaders. Jim is also serving on the Dr. James Tichenor Honorary Fund Committee.

**Q.** Were you involved with any other Psychology organizations?

**A.** I was in Psych Club with Sal Costa as the advisor, but I was never in Psi Chi. I think Psi Chi started either the year before or the year after I left, so it was just getting started as I was on my way out.

**Q.** What was your favorite Psychology class?

**A.** I really genuinely liked them all. I enjoyed the wide diversity because if you took a class from Jim Tichenor, it was very much "If you can't see it and you can't measure it, it doesn't exist." Then you would go to a class with Sal Costa, and it was completely on the other end of the spectrum with all kinds of possibilities. I do remember taking Psych Research with Jim Lyons and that kind of hands on work was always very rewarding.

**Q.** Are there any particular faculty members that gave you a pivotal experience in your educational journey as a psychology major?

**A.** I didn't have as many classes with Bob Cowan as I did with the others, but Jim Lyons, Jim Tichenor, and Sal Costa were instrumental, especially in their patience. Frankly, I was not the most focused student back in those days, but they didn't give up. They had a lot of dedication to all students, not just to me, but all three of those guys were certainly very much involved in later successes of mine. I still remember the things that they taught me, even though that's been many years ago now.

**Q.** Where did you go to graduate school?

**A.** Oh lots of places. I attended Northeast Missouri State University, University of Arizona, University of Missouri, Drake University, University of Phoenix, and University of Northern Illinois. I think that's it. I really enjoyed school. I got my Masters in School Psychology, as I mentioned before. I went on to get an Education Specialist Degree in Leadership, and my doctoral

work was in Educational Psychology and Educational Leadership and Policy.

**Q.** How do you think your experience at Truman prepared you for your future endeavors?

**A.** I still use the things I learned at Truman. I remember when I was being interviewed for my current position. One of the board members asked me if I ever use my psychology training. My response was, "Yes, I use it every day." And I still do. Analyzing and understanding research, understanding the usage of data, understanding human behavior and how people normally react in a variety of circumstances... That's all information and experience I gained at Truman, and I still use it every day.

**Q.** Do you have a funny story or memory about the Psychology Department?

**A.** I have several stories that I can't tell, but I do have one that I think applies here. As part of my School Psych degree in Truman's Masters program I took a class wherein I was given an A for a paper that I never turned in. I still think back on that because I absolutely took the A, but I never did the paper. I never even claimed to have done the paper. The professor even got up and announced to the whole class how well I had done, but I never actually turned anything in. So I considered that a gift, and I just moved on from there.

To see the full text of this interview, along with answers to other questions, such as those listed below, please go to <http://psychology.truman.edu/newsletter.asp>.

- Do you have any advice for current Truman students?
- Were you involved with any research during your undergraduate career?
- What do you hope to accomplish in the future?