

Greetings from the Psychology Department

at Truman State University!

Greetings from the Psychology Department at Truman State University! We have had a busy year!

This fall we held our first homecoming psychology alumni reception with approximately thirty alumni, faculty, and their families in attendance. If you plan to return for Home-

coming in 2012 (i.e., October 19-21), we hope you will stop by our reception to touch base with your fellow psychology alumni and reconnect with your former faculty members. If all goes according to plan, the reception will be held in Psychology's new home! With the movement of Nursing and Communication Disorders to their new building, considerable space opened in Barnett Hall which was offered to Psychology. Although we all liked the proximity of our McClain Hall offices to other campus resources, we had outgrown the space which was originally designed for psychology back in the 1970s for four faculty members. Currently, our fourteen psychology faculty members have offices, research labs, and classrooms in four separate buildings! With Barnett Hall, there will be enough space to meet all of our facility needs, including the addition of study space for our students and storage space for Psi Chi. When the construction is complete, we will have office space in one wing for all psychology faculty members, in addition to new

classrooms (including the Dr. James Tichenor classroom) and labs built to our specifications and housed in the same building as our offices.

In recent years, student parking has been expanded at Barnett, making it a more convenient location for our students. There is also a convenience store housed in the building. We will share Barnett Hall with Justice Systems, Society and Environment (Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography), Military Science, and Communication, including campus media (such as the Index). We feel very fortunate that the university agreed to make this investment in a new and expanded facility for our program at the same time the university is dealing with a major reduction in our state appropriation.

In addition to the Homecoming reception, the Second Psychology Alumni Reunion Event was held in Kirksville on April 13 and 14. Psychology alumni joined either Dr. Karen (Smith) Vittengl for Psychological Research or Professor Sal Costa for General Psychology. Alumnus Dr. Jim Judd, superintendent with the Fayette school district, gave the alumni talk. After the talk, faculty and alumni went to Pagliai's for an informal Ronza gathering. On Saturday, alumni were invited to attend research presentations at the annual Psi Chi Research Conference. Alumni were given a taste of the research that our department will be presenting this May at off-campus professional conferences (i.e., the Midwestern Psychological

Association's (MPA) Annual Meeting (in Chicago) or at the Convention of the Association for Psychological Science (APS; also in Chicago)).

Psychology is also planning its first reunion reception in another city. We hope to hold a psychology alumni reunion gathering in St. Louis, with a tentative date of July 12th. We'll send more information as the schedule is finalized. At this point, Sal Costa, Mark Hatala, and I (Teri Heckert) will be attending this special evening. We appreciate the alumni who are assisting us in planning this event!"

In this edition of the newsletter, our feature stories focus on our student organizations in psychology. The psychology club is open to any student with an interest in psychology while Psi Chi, as many of you may recall, is a national honorary organization in psychology. In the Faculty Spotlight, we focus on Professor Sal Costa, who has been at Truman since 1976 and serves currently as the advisor to the Psychology Club. Many of you may recall Sal's Abnormal Psychology and Serial Killer courses. In our Alumni focus, we interviewed a 1998 graduate, Dr. Lisa Roberts, a practicing Industrial and Organizational psychologist. You'll learn how she is using her Ph.D. from the University of Missouri at St. Louis to develop leaders at Edward Jones.

Faculty Spotlight: Professor Sal Costa

An Interview with: **Greg Cejas**

Senior psychology and biology pre-medicine major from the St. Louis area

Note: Professor Sal Costa has been at Truman since 1975. He holds a bachelor degree in psychology and a master degree in counseling, both from Truman. Sal is active in a number of professional organizations, including the Association to Advance Ethical Hypnosis and the American Association of Criminal Psychology. Besides serving as the Psychology Club advisor, through the years, Sal has worked extensively with our Greek community at Truman.



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

A. First of all, I liked the size of the university. I found it to be a pretty friendly environment. I got involved as an advisor to a lot of different organizations early, which made it easier for me. Plus the fact that I liked the size of the town, the students and faculty were friendly, and I just thought it was a good fit for me.

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

A. First of all, we have a lot more people. We used to have 100 and 125 students per section. I'm actually down to between 75 and 80 students now. One time I had a class of 225 students, and that was all hand-graded back then. We had to write the grades down in a book and hand-grade the tests. Now, we have more technology and our numbers are better; we have more majors, more minors. Psychology has really made its mark. We're one of the biggest majors, and we are the biggest minor on campus.

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

A. I would say the most rewarding aspect of my job is hearing back from the students who have graduated from Truman. They'll invite me to their weddings and let me know how many kids they've had, how they're doing. They more or less

still update me and still continue that contact. They don't forget about me, and I don't forget about them. Technology has helped me keep in touch more than before, with emails being used in addition to phone calls. I also take some amount of satisfaction in seeing how successful they've become. Hopefully I made some of that happen.

Q. *Do you keep in contact with any former students?*

A. Through the year, I keep in contact with at least 100 students, without a doubt. I don't mean this as in just casually; we'll email periodically, or they'll stop by, I might visit them when I'm in St. Louis and have lunch with them.

Q. *Could you talk about your work with hypnosis and your research teams that are studying it?*

A. I kind of got inspired to do research because I had a lot of students that were curious about hypnosis, or had taken the workshop that I teach about it and wanted to learn more, and I thought that maybe I could take this to another level. I've been very fortunate to have excellent student leaders who have been actively involved and have taken the ball and ran with it. They run meetings and carry out the actual research projects. That's what you need. We have more freshmen on board now, which is good because it lets them know what research is all about at a very young stage in their college careers. It's better to have them for four years than to pick them up

towards the end when they're about to graduate.

As for my current teams, one of them is studying the effects of hypnosis and relaxation on immediate and long-term recall of GRE words, and the other is studying the efficacy of hypnosis on athletic performance. For the second study, we are using Truman varsity athletes, giving it some extra relevance. We're still in the data collection phase for both projects, but we're looking forward to finding the results in the coming months.

Q. *When you aren't working hard for Truman and its students, what are you doing?*

A. Well, I'm pretty actively involved in antiques, and a lot of times, I'll be at auctions. A lot of times, it's like therapy for me! I participate in auctioneering, clerking, and ringing, which is holding the stuff to auction up, as a hobby. One thing that not many people know about me is that I like to play basketball over at the elementary school. I always pick the wrong time to go to the Rec Center because all of the courts are always taken! In the summertime, I like to do a lot of yard work, and I'm remodeling my house. My kitchen is the last room left, but I'll let someone else do that for me; I don't even want to go there!

Gift Update: The Dr. Tichenor Honorary Fund

At Homecoming 2011, the adult children of Dr. James (Jim) Tichenor, James Tichenor (back row with the yellow tie) and Dawn (Tichenor) Fritz (in the middle of the middle row), shared the creation of the fund in his honor. The Fund committee had become increasingly concerned that Dr. Tichenor might learn of the fund from someone other than a committee member. We reserved this honor for his children. At the homecoming reception for psychology alumni, it was clear that Dr. Tichenor was deeply moved by this effort. We left him speechless.

Since the public announcement of this fund, our alumni have been responding generously! We thank you for your support of this initiative. As you may recall from the

letter, we are attempting to raise \$ 50,000 in honor of our soon-to-be retired friend. As a lasting tribute to a lifetime spent nurturing and challenging our students, we will name a classroom in Dr. Tichenor's honor and establish an endowed scholarship in his name. At the time of this writing, we had received cash donations of over \$ 24,000. Given the pledges that we have received, we are confident that we will reach our goal by 2013, the final year of Jim's phase-out retirement. That said, we will leave this fund open for those who would like to add to this fund. The larger the endowment amount for the scholarship, the larger will be the award given to the lucky psychology major chosen to receive it.



A New Giving Opportunity: Preparing Our Students for the Future

As mentioned in my opening remarks, psychology has outgrown its current facility. For the past several years, about two-thirds of our graduates have gone on to graduate school. That said, admission to graduate school is becoming increasingly competitive. Gone are the days when a good GPA and a good entrance test score guaranteed admission into master and doctoral programs. Today's graduate schools are expecting research participation, including conference presentation, and the ability to work as part of a team. In order to do research, psychology needed to expand and improve their lab facilities. In order to accommodate larger research teams and to have the class space to allow for collaborative learning, we needed better classrooms, configured for today's stu-

dents. In addition, employers want students with a variety of skills that we develop at Truman via our major and the liberal studies program. A number of these skills, such as interpersonal skills, the ability to work in a team, negotiation skills, conflict management, time management, communication skills, and so on are enhanced through participation in group projects, both inside and outside of class. Consequently, the department is very excited about the new facility being built this spring and summer to house our program. As has been the historical practice at Truman, efforts are underway to fund the furnishings of this facility via private donations.

We hope you will help us to make this new facility a reality by making a generous donation to the Psychology

Fund for Tomorrow. These funds will be used to create a 50+ seat computer classroom facility where each student will have her or his own computer work station. Students can take notes to be saved directly to their network drives. Tests can be taken online with immediate feedback provided to the student. Internet resources can be utilized during in-class group activities. The possibilities for this one classroom are very exciting from a teaching perspective. Furthermore, this room will be used to collect data by many research teams and capstone projects. In addition, the university is building our students a classroom specifically designed for Psychological Research, our senior capstone course. This room will be used to teach this class, with computer work stations for each project. When not in

use for classes, this room will be another space used for research and meetings. In total, we need to raise \$100,000 for this new facility. Fortunately, we have already raised about a fourth of these funds via the Dr. Tichenor Honorary Fund, as one of the newly constructed classrooms will be named in his honor. To make a donation to either the Dr. Tichenor Fund or the Psychology Fund for Tomorrow, you can either mail a check to the psychology department or you may contact Truman's Advancement staff at 800-452-6678 or via their website at https://secure.truman.edu/alumni-s/contribution_new.asp. Just be sure to designate your gift as going to the appropriate fund. For example, mark "Dr. Tichenor Fund" in the "Other" category.

Psychology Student Organizations:

How do our psychology students connect with each other outside of the classroom

Psi Chi is the International Honor Society for students in psychology. It was founded for the purpose of encouraging, stimulating, and maintaining excellence in scholarship and advancing the science of psychology. Our chapter focuses on helping psychology students prepare for graduate school and get the most out of their education. Psi Chi events on our campus are open to any psychology major or minor. That said, to become a member of Psi Chi, the national membership criteria must be met.

Jennifer Pearlstein: Psi Chi president

An Interview with: **Garett Foster**

Junior Psychology major from St. Louis, Missouri



Note: Jennifer is a senior psychology and interdisciplinary studies-cognitive science major and statistical methods minor from St. Louis, Missouri. She hopes to eventually earn a Ph.D. in clinical psychology.

Q. What does Psi Chi do?

A. Psi Chi is geared toward helping psychology students get into graduate school. We put on a lot of events, such as workshops for Curriculum Vitas and personal statements. We also hold two big events each year. In the Fall, we host a graduate school expo. This year, we had 14 graduate programs from all over the nation come and talk to psychology students. It was the biggest expo to date! In the Spring, we host a research conference. Students submit abstracts and then present the research they have done in psychology. We have both oral and poster presentations. Psi Chi also hosts several social events, such as the ice cream social we had at the end of January. It's always a lot of fun.

Q. What's it like being president of Psi Chi?

A. Being Psi Chi president is incredibly rewarding. Psi Chi initiates the strongest students in the field. I am honored to serve as president of such an intelligent, dedicated, and talented group of people. Psi

Chi is fairly unique in the functioning of its executive board in that we work more like a team than like individuals. The executive board of Psi Chi is an unbelievable resource, because I know there's an educated and encouraging group of people I can bounce ideas off of, pertaining to Psi Chi business or otherwise. It's amazing working with a group in a collaborative and beneficial way. In college I feel like students get accustomed to group work being more frustrating and tedious than advantageous. With the Psi Chi executive board, I know there's no way Psi Chi could accomplish what it does without each and every executive board member and our faculty advisor, Dr. David Conner.

Q. What is your favorite thing about being president?

A. I feel passionately about the work we're doing – the Graduate Expo in the fall, the research conference in the spring, our new mentorship program, etc – and I could not have asked for a better group of people to work with.



Q. What else are you involved in on campus?

A. Other than Psi Chi, I am involved with: the Center for Applied Statistics and Evaluation, currently holding the position of senior consultant; Alpha Sigma Gamma, a community service sorority; the Women's Resource Center; Active Minds, an organization trying to increase awareness of mental health issues and reduce the stigma associated with them; and the honor societies of Phi Beta Kappa and Phi Kappa Phi. Aside from school and extracurricular commitments, I enjoy exercising, crafting (scrapbooking and knitting, specifically), reading, and spending time with friends and family.

Q. What kind of research do you do?

A. I am currently involved with Dr. Jeffrey Vittengl's research team. In the past, I have also worked with Dr. Terry Palmer. Research projects at Truman have included studying social attraction in get-acquainted conversations, the relation between affect and memory, intermodal guidance of attention, the relation between personality, role playing, and social stress, and more. Outside of Truman, I worked at the Missouri Institute of Mental Health studying intervention and prevention programs for substance abuse and at Washington University - St. Louis studying self and other ratings of personality, life events, health, and mood.

Christine Bowles: Psychology Club President

An Interview with: Tosha Atkins

Senior Psychology pre-MAE-elementary education major
from Kansas City, Missouri

Note: Christine is a senior psychology major and English minor from St. Louis, Missouri. Next fall, she will be attending Illinois State University to earn her Master in Clinical Psychology.

Psychology Club provides an opportunity for students to exchange ideas in the field of psychology. It also attempts to present information about the current trends in psychology. The club meets twice per month and often there is a guest speaker.

Q. What does the Psychology Club do?

A. We host two meetings per month and speakers come to discuss various topics within psychology. It is very informal and there are no requirements to join.

Q. What speakers have visited Psychology Club this year?

A. We started the year with a hypnosis demonstration by Professor Sal Costa, our faculty sponsor. Other speakers included Dr. Tichenor, who spoke about ethics in clinical practice. We have also had a representative from the Child Development Center speak about working with children. At the end of February, Psychology Club had a field trip to the Juvenile Detention

Center in Kirksville where we were given a very informative lesson about a child's trip through the justice system and allowed a tour of the facility. The best part was that we were able to spend time with several of the residents of the center and talk with them about how they got there and what it was like. We learned that there are several internship opportunities available to Truman students at the center, and one member remarked that the trip had inspired her to apply for the position this summer.

Q. What else are you involved in on Truman's campus?

A. I am involved in Alpha Sigma Gamma, Psi Chi, and Active Minds. I am a member of Dr. Heckert's research team and she serves as

McNair mentor, too. I am also the co-leader for two of Professor Costa's research teams.

Q. What is the McNair program?

A. The McNair program is a federally-funded program from the Department of Education that helps underrepresented students get into graduate school programs. To qualify, you need to be a member of an under-represented group, come from a low-income family, or be a first generation college student. Once you are in the program, you are given an academic advising team. They really care about getting you through college and into a graduate school. A large part of the program is conducting and presenting an independent research project. I did my project this past summer on the effects of expressive letter writing on forgiveness. Through McNair funding, I was able to present my research at a conference in Kansas City and soon will be presenting my research at MPA. The McNair program was definitely the best experience I've had in my college career.

Q. What did you do to prepare

yourself for graduate work in clinical psychology?

A. A lot of my preparation came through the McNair program, as they gave me the opportunity to attend GRE-preparation classes and helped me prepare my graduate school application materials by giving me extensive critiques. Additionally, the McNair program gave me the opportunity to spend a semester developing a research project and then a summer conducting the research. I was responsible for all aspects of the research. This experience gave me incredible insight into the research process. I think most importantly, though, were the relationships I developed with my professors. Of course, these are important in an obvious way (e.g., letters of recommendation) but my professors also gave me advice and encouragement. Truman professors are so helpful! For example, I took my curriculum vitae (CV) to a professor I had never spoken to before. He critiqued my CV on the spot and gave me an article on how to write CVs, along with a copy of his own. None of my friends at other colleges can speak as highly about their professors as I can, so I would say they were definitely the most critical part of my preparation.

Psychology Student Advisory Council (P-SAC)

The Psychology Student Advisory Council (P-SAC) was created by incoming department chair, Dr. Teri Heckert, with the endorsement of her faculty colleagues, beginning in the 2010-2011 school year. P-SAC is a sounding board for the department chair. The board provides a voice within the department for students, in addition to providing a leadership development opportunity. In addition, the council has worked on several special departmental projects,

including alumni newsletters, creation of a departmental honors designation, website development, alumni reunion events, and visit events. It meets approximately once per month during the regular semester. Members are chosen to represent a variety of perspectives including pre-MAE students, students from urban and rural areas, at least one Psi Chi officer, an active member of the Psychology Club, those involved in mentored research in-



cluding at least one student with off-campus conference presentation experience, and someone who has completed an internship. Although most students are psychology majors, we have been success-

ful each year in recruiting at least one psychology minor to serve on the council. You can read more about the past and current P-SAC members by visiting <http://psychology.truman.edu/psac.asp>.

Alumni Profile: Dr. Lisa Roberts

An Interview with: Clair Reynolds

Senior psychology and political science major from Illinois. Clair will be attending St. Louis University in the fall to earn a Ph.D. in I/O Psychology.



Note: Dr. Lisa Roberts graduated from Truman in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology with a minor in Spanish. She has since earned a Doctorate from the University of Missouri – St. Louis in Industrial/Organizational (I/O) psychology. Lisa now works for Edward Jones in Financial Advisor Leadership Development. Lisa currently lives in St. Louis with her three-year old daughter Amelia and her husband, Dr. Michael Zahra (also a Truman graduate and a doctor in the Pediatric ICU at Cardinal Glennon Children's Hospital). [Editor's note: Congratulations to Lisa, Mike, and Amelia on the addition of baby Sam to their family!]

Q. Besides earning a Ph.D. in I/O psychology, what have you done since leaving Truman?

A. While completing my graduate degree at UMSL, I secured an internship with Anheuser-Bush (AB). During this internship, I had the opportunity to help design employee surveys and analyze data to provide feedback and suggestions to managers and leaders of the departments throughout the organization. In addition to this role, I also worked on improving AB's selection and assessment methods, creating guides on how to conduct quality interviews. After my internship with Anheuser-Bush, I moved on briefly to Edward Jones as a Senior Performance Development Specialist.

Q. So, what took you to Florida?

A. In 2006, I moved to Miami, Florida to work for Burger King in their Human Resources department. This experience was invaluable because I was the only I/O psycholo-

gist in the entire company, making me responsible for and involved with every aspect of I/O psychology. My tasks included developing selection strategies, creating surveys, administering training, and conducting data analyses.

Q. Did Truman adequately prepare you for graduate school and future endeavors?

A. "Yes!" I was much more comfortable writing and doing research than some of my colleagues who attended different undergraduate institutions. The smaller class sizes and personal interactions with professors at Truman were more similar to my experiences in graduate school and the work environment, so I was confident participating and working in these settings. Success at Truman State leads to success in graduate school!

Q. Do you have any advice for others?

A. The most important advice is to "gravitate to opportunities!" A person should accept and seek out as many opportunities as possible, even if they seem mundane at first. Exposure builds upon itself, and continues to build, so that more and more exciting opportunities come your way. Many of my own personal experiences came from following this advice.

Q. What about advice for current Truman students?

A. I would recommend not just getting involved on a research team (or multiple teams!) but also presenting your research as often as possible. Presenting research improves your communication skills by offering real experience that cannot be replicated in a classroom. As an undergrad at Truman, you should seek out opportunities where you have to state your opinion and defend it in healthy debate. In graduate school and in the workplace, you will have to do this often but it is not a skill that is handed to you, rather it must be proactively developed. You should gain confidence as an undergrad so that you cannot only think critically and give constructive criticism, but accept it as well. Finally, statistics are essential! You should take as many upper-level stat classes as possible because you will be using them in graduate school and it will set you apart from the rest.

Q. Do you have any other comments?

A. I'm grateful for all of the experiences and professors that I had while at Truman State because it was the first step to get where I am today. Fortunately, I have been able to develop a great balance between life and work, which has allowed me to raise my family and still maintain a successful career.

Student Research: Sponsor a Student

As mentioned by Dr. Roberts, students should present their research. These off-campus presentations have become critical to graduate school acceptance. As you may recall from prior newsletters, our department typically sends a considerable number of students to regional and national professional conferences. For example, in March 2012, Dr. Shaffer took eleven members of his team to the Association for Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback Conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

This May, the department is sending 23 students to MPA and seven students to APS. Historically, the department has paid for the registration, transportation, and lodging costs of our students. They are responsible for the cost of meals. However, if you have been following the state budget situation in Missouri, you know that we are bracing for yet another significant cut in state appropriations. In our department, we are expecting at least a 20% reduction in our allotted budget and this reduc-

tion must be absorbed by travel. As a result, for the first time, we are giving our alumni the opportunity to sponsor a student's travel to a conference. Typically, it costs \$300 to cover the registration, transportation, and hotel portion for one student. If you are not in a position to sponsor the entire cost, but would like to help, that would be wonderful, too. For example, with a donation of \$10 per month, your yearly total would cover the cost of a train ticket to Chicago for a student present-

ing her research at MPA. For \$20 per month, the yearly total would pay for about one night at a hotel for four students (who would share one room). The Advancement office can help you with setting up automatic monthly payments from either your bank account or credit card. Our students thank you in advance for any amount that you can share with them.