Greetings, and welcome to a new academic year in the Department of Psychology. We anticipate an exciting and productive year as the Department continues to grow. Psychology now boasts a staggering 750 undergraduate majors, making us the largest department in the College of Arts & Sciences. Our students participate in a broad range of transformative experiences: they gain intercultural understanding by studying around the world; they strengthen our urban engagement through community service; and, under the leadership of our faculty, they conduct innovative research that will benefit our global society. In fact, more than 100 undergraduates sign up for “Directed Study” courses each year, allowing them to gain first-hand research experience alongside our faculty members.

Our faculty and graduate students continue to publish their research in books and top scholarly journals. Dr. Iris Berent (profiled on page four) is currently writing a book on the psychology of language. Dr. Harlan Lane, Northeastern’s only recipient of a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship, returns from sabbatical this fall. He has been working on yet another book – his 18th! Dr. Judith Hall, a world-renowned expert on nonverbal communication and doctor-patient communication, is Northeastern’s only ISI Thompson “Highly-Cited” scholar. The work of graduate student Lisa Williams (now Dr. Williams!), along with her faculty mentor Dr. David DeSteno, is highlighted in this newsletter (right). Ms. Amanda Carey, a PhD student in Dr. Jay McLaughlin’s lab, recently received a very prestigious Pre-Doctoral Fellowship from the National Institutes of Health. In the past decade, the only Northeastern students to receive these awards have been Psychology students, and Ms. Carey is the eighth from our Department to receive this wonderful distinction. There is much more – but I’ll save some for the next issue!

I hope that you can tell from this very abbreviated list that a great many exciting things are happening in our Department. I urge you to make the most of your time at Northeastern by volunteering in faculty laboratories, experiencing coop, serving as a peer mentor, and discovering the University’s countless opportunities for personal growth. Do not hesitate to get in touch with me, or with the Department’s peer advisors, to learn about the experiences that await you in the Department of Psychology.

- Professor Rhea Eskew

Pride’s Potential to Foster Individual Success

THE AGE-OLD question of whether pride is the seventh sin or an adaptive virtue has been answered by two Northeastern University scientists. Contrary to popular belief, the researchers found that pride not only leads individuals to take on leadership roles in teams, but also fosters admiration, as opposed to scorn, from teammates.

“We found that pride is quite undeserving of its negative reputation,” said David DeSteno, associate professor of psychology and co-author of the study. “Pride actually constitutes a functional social emotion with important implications for leadership and the building of social capital.”

DeSteno and lead author Lisa Williams designed an experiment including individual and group activities. For the individual activities, certain participants were induced to feel proud. Participants next interacted cooperatively on a problem-solving task and were asked to evaluate their partners’ leadership and likability. The participant who received the pride induction took on a...
Welcome Students!

To our new freshmen, and to others who might not know, the Psych News is our Department’s collective effort to inform and, sometimes, to entertain you.

It is intended for all members of the Department—faculty, alumni, students, and staff—but most of all for the undergraduate students.

Each issue will have items of interest to you, including posting opportunities, announcements about co-op, features on exciting new research, profiles of alumni, and insights into what kind of future might await you in psychology. We welcome your participation—so please come see the Editor to ask how you can contribute!

In this edition, we have provided an overview of the Department, covering the advising system, the Psychology Club, co-op, and members of our faculty. We will also highlight recent faculty research.

dominant role and was perceived as the most “hands-on” during the activity. In addition, their team-mates viewed them as more likable than the other participants.

“These are some of the first findings that show functional outcomes of pride within the context of actual social behavior,” said Williams. “Although when taken to extremes, pride can certainly be maladaptive, this research demonstrates the emotion’s potential for fostering successful interpersonal interaction.”

The findings were published in the March issue of the journal Psychological Science. The authors believe that these findings hold implications for successful management and team dynamics, especially in the context of organizational behavior.

“Pride,” they note, “can play an integral role in enhancing team functioning by fostering confidence and admiration.”

Additionally, graduates of our Department often provide us with updates, describing where they are now, and how they got there. Many of them have done extremely well, often securing professional opportunities that they could never have imagined before attending Northeastern University. Furthermore, many of our alumni have made financial donations to the Department, giving back in a way that directly enhances the quality of your education.

Finally, I would like to say that Northeastern has never looked better, nor been such an exciting place to live and work. Everyone—faculty, staff and students—feels a remarkable sense of achievement and potential as we look at our beautiful campus and consider all the wonderful people who are among us at all levels.

It is always important to remember that a community is made by the people in it—it isn’t just given to us from above, and it didn’t simply spring up from nowhere. We are proud of the community that exists in the Psychology Department.

So, here is my message to undergraduates—you are a part of this community. Enjoy what it offers, and imagine new ways to make it even better!

Professor Judith Hall Editor, Psych News

Our Department is divided into four major areas: Behavioral Neuroscience; Language/Cognition; Personality/Social; and Perception. In an effort to help you navigate the Department, we have listed our faculty by area, along with a brief description of their wide-ranging research interests:

1. Behavioral Neuroscience

Dr. Marcelo Febo’s research focuses on the functional and neuroanatomical substrates of motivational behaviors. He currently studies maternal rodents as potential models for social and emotional attachment.

Dr. Craig Ferris’s research focuses on developmental behavioral neuroscience with a comparative approach studying a variety of animals including hamsters, rats, and monkeys.

Dr. Denise Jackson studies the production and comprehension of American Sign Language to shed light on universal properties of language.

Dr. Joanne Miller investigates the production and comprehension of spoken language.

Dr. Neal Pearlmuter studies sentence comprehension and production in adults.

2. Language/Cognition

Dr. Iris Berent’s research seeks to identify the constraints shaping the organization of the language system and to determine the extent to which the system is specialized for the processing of linguistic information.

Dr. John Coley studies how culture and experience impact basic cognitive processes of categorization, reasoning, and conceptual development.

Dr. Nancy Kim investigates how causal and explanatory knowledge is mentally represented and organized, and how this representation affects fundamental cognitive processes such as categorization, memory, and decision-making.

Dr. Harlan Lane studies the structure, history, and use of American Sign Language to shed light on universal properties of language.

Dr. Joanne Miller investigates the production and comprehension of spoken language.

Dr. Neal Pearlmuter studies sentence comprehension and production in adults.

3. Personality/Social

Dr. Randall Colvin’s research focuses on personality and psychological functioning.

Dr. David DeSteno’s interests broadly center on the interplay of emotion and social behavior.

Dr. Judith Hall’s research focuses on sex differences in nonverbal behavior, role-based behavior in social interaction, dominance, and the assessment of interpersonal sensitivity.

Dr. Stephen Harkins studies the effect of motivation on task performance.

4. Perception

Dr. Naarendorf studies vision in humans and animals. He is particularly interested in the neural basis of night vision.

Dr. Yury Petrov’s interest lies in the mechanisms of low-level visual processing, including contextual effects in contrast- and stereo-domains, contour/boundary formation, and information encoding.

Dr. Adam Reeves studies human perception and information processing.

We have two faculty members whose research programs do not fall within the four groups:

Dr. Martin Block’s research seeks to identify the roles of environmental, cognitive, and other psychological variables that regulate species-typical and uncommon behaviors used by animals to deal with ecological and psychological problems.

Dr. Perrin Colden’s research focuses on the process of ethics education, particularly in the development of an interdisciplinary model of ethical inquiry (AIR Model). The Department also has two faculty members whose primary focus is the undergraduate program:

Dr. Dan Quinn is the Head Advisor for Psychology.

Dr. Nancy Snyder is responsible for our students who are interested in Education and advises students with interest in clinical psychology.

To view full profiles of faculty members and examples of their undergraduate courses, please visit: www.psych.neu.edu
A FOCUS ON RESEARCH

Professor Iris Berent Examines the Sound Patterns of World Languages

To better understand the human capacity for language, Dr. Iris Berent is searching for common sound patterns—simple syllables like “bla”—that are universally preferred across all human languages.

This research into language patterns is being funded by a $1 million grant. Her work has been continuously funded for over 14 years by grants from the National Institutes of Health’s National Institute on Deafness and Other Communications Disorders.

Linguists have shown that, across the world’s languages, certain sound patterns occur more frequently than others. “Patterns such as ‘tra’ are far more frequent than patterns such as ‘iba,’” Dr. Berent explains. Although there are many possible explanations for this, she is intrigued by the possibility, suggested by MIT linguist Noam Chomsky and Harvard psychologist Steven Pinker, that the patterns reflect a special instinct humans have for language.

This instinct allows only certain patterns to occur in human languages, says Dr. Berent, and these restrictions are active universally, in the brains of all speakers. For many years, this possibility has been examined using mostly theoretical arguments. Dr. Berent has shown how the issue can be addressed using standard experimental techniques of cognitive psychology.

To this end, she asks Northeastern undergraduates to take part in simple psychological experiments, which involve listening to sound sequences, including sounds like “bril” and “blit,” that do not occur in their own language, but do occur in other world languages. Some of the sounds occur frequently; others less so.

Her goal is to determine whether the students favor the sound patterns that are preferred in other languages, compared to those that are less popular, despite having heard none of the sequences before.

To determine if such preferences are universal, she conducts similar experiments with speakers of other languages, including Russian, Hebrew, Korean and Spanish, through a network of international collaborations with various institutions.

Dr. Berent started her academic career in a seemingly unrelated discipline—music. As an undergraduate, Dr. Berent, who is from Haifa, Israel, was on track to become a concert flutist. But she couldn’t ignore, she says, the “questions in the back of my mind” about how people perceive music.

After earning two undergraduate degrees in flute performance and musicology, she moved to Mexico City with her husband, a violinist and Mexican native. She traveled to northeastern Mexico to study an ancient indigenous tribe, the Huastecas, to learn how they came to love their own unique form of music.

“I wanted to find how these people perceive their own music and why different musical idioms seem to share some important properties,” she recalls. She soon realized, however, that she needed a broader understanding of music structure as well as tools to study how the mind works.

It wasn’t until she and her husband moved to Pittsburgh, where Dr. Berent enrolled in two University of Pittsburgh graduate programs—one in psychology and the other in music theory—that she decided to focus her studies on language. Language is easier to study than music, she says, because the field of linguistics is more developed than that of music theory.

Currently, Dr. Berent is writing a book on her studies of the phonological mind, to be published by Cambridge University Press, while continuing her research and teaching a Psychology of Language course. She always has an active group of undergraduates involved in her research.

Finding a Path in Psychology

At the age of twenty-two, newly-minted graduate Alison Olliff found herself in a stiff competitive arena. A psychology major from Northeastern, Alison had set her sights on a “dream job,” hoping to work as a Clinical Case Manager for male exconvicts.

“The job required a Master’s degree, which I didn’t have,” she recalls, “I was in competition with people who were older than me, with significantly more education, and degrees in almost every area of psychology.”

For Alison, this particular job application represented the culmination of a long discovery process. Years before, hailing from a small high school in New Jersey, Alison had eagerly anticipated all that a Northeastern education might bring her. “You can imagine my excitement to finally move to Boston,” she said. “I left the small town shadow to experience the sights and sounds of a big city.”

It wasn’t long before Alison began to identify her professional calling. “With the support and encouragement of the Psychology Department—especially my advisor—I took co-op positions working with exconvicts in a dual diagnosis program.”

The first-hand experience would change her forever. “The co-op position cemented my desire to work with this specific population,” she explained. At the age of 19, she had already discovered her life’s ambition.

Upon graduating from Northeastern, Alison was equipped with an impressive resume and a wealth of knowledge from her psychology classes. Yet, during her job interview, she was plagued by doubt and concern about her age.

“I tried to remember everything I had learned in each of my psychology courses,” she said, “Professor Snyder’s lectures in Abnormal Psychology, and her Clinical Seminar; Professor Calvin’s discussions on personality; and the interviewing skills Michelle Israel drilled into our heads during our required co-op course.”

Thankfully, Alison’s memory served her well. “Before I knew it, I had managed to regale my boss with story after story of classes and co-op, laughing and joking the entire time. A few days later, I received a call informing me that I had the job.”

continued on back cover
WHICH PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT ADVISOR should I see? How do I schedule an appointment to see a Psychology Department Advisor?

Ask yourself the following questions to help decide whom you should see for advising in the Psychology Department.

(1) Do you fit into any of the following groups?

**Honors Program.** Your advisor is Dr. Colvin. Email him to ask questions or schedule an appointment (t.colvin@neu.edu).

**Dual Major in Education & Psychology.** Your advisor is Dr. Snyder. Email her to ask questions or contact the Psychology Office (617-373-3076) to schedule an appointment with her.

**Dual Majors in Linguistics & Psychology, Computer Science & Cognitive Psychology, or Information Science & Cognitive Psychology.** Your advisor is Dr. Miller. Email her to ask questions or schedule an appointment (j.miller@neu.edu).

**Dual Major in American Sign Language and Psychology.** Your advisor is Dr. Lane. Email him to ask questions (lane@neu.edu), or contact the Psychology Office (617-373-3076) to schedule an appointment with him.

**Interdisciplinary Behavioral Neuroscience Program.** Your advisor is Dr. Davis of the Biology Department. Email him to ask questions or schedule an appointment (e.davis@neu.edu)

(2) Are you looking for information on a specific topic?

**Clinical Psychology.** Our clinical specialist is Dr. Snyder. Email her to ask questions (n.snyder@neu.edu), or contact the Psychology Office (617-373-3076) to schedule an appointment with her.

**Cooperative Education in Psychology.** Please see the separate story on our co-op program.

**Arts & Sciences Core or NU Core requirements, evaluation of transfer credit, or other College or University requirements.** The College of Arts & Sciences advisors for psychology majors are Ms. Kate Farnham and Mr. Dave Merry. Email (k.farnham@neu.edu, d.merry@neu.edu) or call 617-373-3980 to ask questions or schedule an appointment.

**The Experiential Education Requirement.** Our Experiential Education advisor is Dr. Cohen. Email him to ask questions (p.cohen@neu.edu), or use sign-up sheets on his office door to schedule an appointment.

**Psi Chi National Psychology Honors Society.** The Psi Chi advisor is Dr. Kim. Email her to ask questions or schedule an appointment (n.kim@neu.edu).

**Psychology Club.** Please see the separate story on the Psychology Club.

**Pre-Med.** Our pre-med advisor is Dr. Melloni. Email him to ask questions or schedule an appointment (melloni@research.neu.edu).

**Pre-Law.** For information on pre-law studies, please go to the following website: www.northeastern.edu/prelaw/

(3) Is your question something that might be better answered by a fellow student?

If so, contact our peer advisors. These are senior undergraduate students who know their way around the Department and the university. You can email them, reach them via IM, or post a question on their discussion board on the Psychology and Related Majors Blackboard website. Contact the peer advisor who handles your part of the alphabet first, but if this student is not around, feel free to contact any of them.

(4) Is your question something that other students might also be wondering about?

If so, Dr. Quinn (Head Advisor) has a discussion board called Quinn’s Query on the Psychology and Related Majors Blackboard website. You can post questions there, and he will answer them as promptly as possible.

(5) If none of these apply:

To schedule an advising appointment with a faculty advisor, contact the main Psychology Department Office at 617-373-3076, or stop by 125 Nightingale in person. If there is a particular faculty member you would like to meet with, feel free to ask to see this person. If not, there are a variety of advising times available throughout the week, and you can choose a time that’s convenient for you. If you’re making an appointment to discuss graduation clearance, changing your major to Psychology, course equivalents for study abroad, or other special or unusual academic issues, please let the office staff know, so that they can direct you to an advisor best able to work with you.

Psychology Co-op

Many of you have probably heard of Cooperative Education program. In fact many of you may have chosen Northeastern because of the co-op program.

In the College of Arts & Sciences, co-op is an optional program in which students have three opportunities to participate in co-op. Students can choose one of two cycles: January until the end of June or July to the end of December.

Students can choose how many co-ops they want to do (although we strongly encourage at least two). Preparation for co-op starts the semester prior to co-op and all first time co-op students must take and pass a one-credit co-op class (which is taught by us) and be in good academic standing. The class is designed to assist you in preparing a resume, learning how to interview for a job, teach you about the types of positions available in your field, and deal with workplace issues.

If you are planning on co-op for Spring/Summer 2010, please make sure you attend one of the mandatory meetings that will take place this September.

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the class of 2014 and talk to you a little bit about what you can do now to prepare for co-op your sophomore year.

The first thing is to get involved at Northeastern. There are many great opportunities at Northeastern for involvement in service learning, undergraduate research, and academic and social clubs. Employers want to see leadership skills, the ability to work with others, positive work and academic references, and the ability to multitask. Another piece of advice is to do your research. Talk to older students who have “been there and done that”, utilize Career Services, and talk to your professors and advisors.

We wish you all success in the 2009-2010 academic year!

- Charlotte Lam (students A-K), c.lam@neu.edu
- Michelle Israel (students L-Z), m.israel@neu.edu
Alison was delighted to begin working, but she couldn’t help but wonder how she had managed to beat out the other candidates for the position. “I was fresh out of college,” she observed, “I thought, ‘Why me? Why not the girl with a Master’s degree in Expressive Therapy, who was working toward a Doctorate? Why not any of the other applicants?’”

Approximately one month into her employment, Alison got her answer. “While typing up client notes, my boss and I got to talking about the job,” she recalled. “He said, ‘You know, we interviewed a lot of people for this position, but no one had your level of experience.’”

Alison looks to her alma mater with a sense of pride and appreciation. “I am grateful to Northeastern each and every day I walk into the program, doing a job I love, with support from the people who helped get me there,” she said.

“Northeastern not only equipped me with a solid education to achieve my goals, but the courage and determination to help those less fortunate accomplish theirs. I am thankful for the friends I’ve made, the wonderful teachers who have gone out of their way to make me a better person, and the lessons I’ve learned about the kind of person I can become.

“If anyone asks me about my educational background,” Alison noted, “I say with pride that I graduated with a Psychology Degree from Northeastern University.”