

## Courtney Baker Introduces Herself



My research interests focus on better understanding why effective mental health programs work, or fail to work, in real life settings. In particular, I am interested in translating these programs into community settings serving high-risk, low-income preschoolers. In situations where other researchers

might ask "Does this program work?," I ask "How does this program work?" with the expectation that the answer to this question can lead us to further improve the mental health through prevention and treatment programs available to one of society's most vulnerable groups. In the context of my research, I have found, for example, that if preschool teachers voiced concerns about implementing a program before it started, then they were less likely to participate. Similarly, if teachers reported that they did not feel supported by their director and their colleagues, then they were also less likely to implement the program. We know that young children experience short- and long-term benefits across social, behavioral, and academic areas from participating in effective programs like the one the teachers were supposed to implement. The findings of my research are important, because if we can find a way to address these issues, then more young children stand to benefit from proven programs. I utilize an approach called Community-Based Participatory Research in my work, which emphasizes working in partnership with community members in order to ask useful, relevant, Continued on page 2

## Outstanding Young Alumna



Dr. Angela Rose Black (BS, 98) was honored as the 2012 Outstanding Young Alumna of the Tulane School of Science and Engineering. Dr. Black is an assistant professor in the Department of Kinesiology and Community Health at the University of Illinois.

Her work examines the influence of stress on Black women's preventative health behavior and outcomes.

## Cruz Promoted to Office Manager



Steve Cruz joined the Department of Psychology in August 2010 as Executive Secretary. A veteran member of the Tulane Staff, Steve began in 1990 at the Tulane

University Medical Center, transitioned to the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine then, most recently, served as Office Manager at the Cowen Institute, housed at University Square. Electing a change in rank, however temporary, often elicits curiosity but an important reason is evident in his answer to the question "What do you like best about your current position?" Steve reports that he missed being in an academic setting. He finds the students Continued on page 4

## Undergraduate Awards

### **Arnold Gerall Prize in Neuroscience**

Sara Hunt, Michael Mainguy, and Michael Seay

### **Rosa Cahn Hartman Prize in Psychology**

Sophia Olton-Webster, Ashlei Peterson, and Emma Ross

### **The Anne M. McPherson Memorial Student Award**

Yelena Johnson and Ayesha Sujjan

### **The Senior Scholar in Psychology**

Dhruv Gupta and Yingji Wan

### **The Barbara E. Moely Award for Psychology in the Public Interest**

Taylor Adney and Lindsey Shroff

### **Aaron Hartman Medal in Psychology**

Lauren Eierman, Sara Kaplan, and Madeline Schwartz

# Graduate Summer Research Awards

## Robert E. Flowerree Summer Research Fellowships

Danielle Charney, David Doyle, Elin Grissom, Wayne Hawley, Emily Shaffer, Tara Van Bommel

## William P. Dunlap Memorial Summer Research Fellowship

Jennifer Maldarelli

### On the Aging Female Brain



Dr. Jill Daniel was recently awarded a 1.39 million dollar grant by the National Institute on Aging, part of the National Institutes of Health, to study the impact

of midlife estrogen use on the aging female brain. Estrogen use in women begun during a critical window near menopause is hypothesized to prevent or delay age-associated cognitive decline. However, due to potential health risks women often limit use of estrogen therapy to a few years to treat menopausal symptoms. The long-term consequences for the aging female brain of short-term use of estrogens are unknown. Using a rat model of menopause, results from Dr. Daniel's lab demonstrate that short-term use of estrogen in middle-age enhances memory in aging females, effects that persist long after the estrogen administration is terminated. Along with the enhancement in memory were long-term positive impacts on the hippocampus, a brain area important for learning and memory and one that is particularly vulnerable to the detrimental effects of aging. Dr. Daniel's new grant will allow for investigation into mechanisms by which a relatively short-term period of estrogen treatment in middle-age can exert lasting impacts on the hippocampus and memory.

**Courtney Baker** (continued from page 1)

and culturally appropriate research questions which have the potential to lead directly to positive change. I decided to join the strong faculty of our Department because of their commitment to conducting respectful and equitable community-based research with the goal of improving the quality of prevention and intervention programming in school and community settings. I have also been impressed by the way that the Department and the University as a whole have embraced community involvement and capacity building in an effort to meet the needs of the city of New Orleans. I believe that my research has the potential to further this effort, and I look forward to the challenge of improving the mental health services available to high-risk, low-income preschoolers in New Orleans and beyond.

### The Seventh Inning Stretch...



#### *Drying out Stern and Israel, Fall 2005*

Seven years after Katrina, we pause for a moment to consider where we've been...and where we are now.

Before Katrina hit in August 2005, the Department had 17 full-time tenure-track faculty in areas of School Psychology, Industrial/Organizational Psychology, and Psychological Science (including two newly-hired assistant professors who promptly spent their first semesters away from New Orleans). We were the largest major in the Liberal Arts & Sciences. With the exception of a Department Chair, none of us held administrative appointments.

Katrina dramatically changed the face of the Department. The I/O faculty departed and its doctoral program folded. Four new faculty joined us as the 2006-2007 academic year began. Nine of the current 22 full-time faculty were hired since Katrina. At the doctoral level, we now identify three distinct clusters: School/ Developmental Psychology, Cognitive/ Behavioral Neuroscience, and Social Psychology. At the undergraduate level, we have added courses in the Self, Clinical Neuropsychology, Human Sexuality, Sensation & Perception, Intergroup Relations, and Neurobiology of Stress. Three of us hold 1/2-time administrative appointments outside the Department, extramural funding has increased exponentially, and the Department hired its first endowed chair. Housed in  
continued on page 4...

# What I did with my B.S....

By Sarah C. Covert ('05)



When I graduated from Tulane in 2005, I never would have guessed I would be where I am today. After working as a social justice nonprofit

professional for five years, I grew frustrated with the slow rate of policy change. Inspired by the warmth and grounding presence of my two cats, I made a major career shift and started a small business providing in-home pet care. Two years later, business is booming, I manage four employees, and we are making social justice change in a way I never imagined possible.

Sarah the Pet Sitter LLC provides thoughtful pet care and owner support that intentionally respects the pet, the family, the community, and the planet. As New Orleans's premier eco-friendly pet sitter, we reduce our reliance on gas by biking to our pet sitting visits around the city, recycle anything created during the visit that is eligible, and actively engage in community.

So many of my experiences obtaining a degree in Psychology play a role in my work.

From Social Psychology, I learned how our company fits into our clients' daily lives and how we can create an organization to which they love being connected.

When I introduce an at-risk child or adolescent in the neighborhood to a dog, I know how formative each experience can be. This draws upon my course work in Child Development, Adolescent Psychology, and in Prejudiced Communication.

From Personality and Industrial/Organizational Psychology, I learned how to lead my staff and learned the motivational principles that underlie clients' pet care choices.

The research skills that I acquired in my statistics courses, methods classes, independent studies, and honors thesis have been critical: using statistics and data to guide decision-making, communicating effectively both in writing and orally, and managing time wisely.

Dating back to my first course in Introductory Psychology, I developed an appreciation of the roles of nature and nurture in our behavior. The evolutionary instincts of our pets, their propensity for learning, and connection between their cognitions and body continues to fascinate me.

All of my experiences as part of the Department of Psychology remind me daily that we can never know which small stimulus might impact someone. Even as someone's dog walker, I still get the chance to affect people's views on poverty, environmental change, criminal justice, and education. I now do it with culture change as a frame and I really do see it working every day.

To learn more about the services Sarah the Pet Sitter LLC provides, please visit our website. <http://sarahthepetsitter.com>.

## Faculty Accolades

**John Stibbs Award for Outstanding Faculty Member**  
Beth E. F. Wee

**Honor's Professor of the Year**  
Janet B. Ruscher

**Suzanne and Stephen Weiss Presidential Fellow**  
Janet B. Ruscher

**Distinguished Newcomb Fellow**  
Gary P. Dohanich

**Lifetime Achievement Award**  
(Louisiana School Psychology Association)  
Bonnie K. Nastasi

# Faculty Promotions

## Promotion to Associate Professor

Laurie T. O'Brien

## Promotion to Professor

Michael Cunningham

Bonnie K. Nastasi

## Promotion to Senior Professor of Practice

Beth E. F. Wee

### Seventh Inning Stretch (continued from p.2)

the School of Science and Engineering, Psychology remains the largest major on the uptown campus.

While Stern Hall underwent its massive air-drying, the Department kept running. The Spring 2006 class schedule was planned via email and conference calls, while faculty and grad students continued research at host universities. Displaced undergraduates queried about transferring courses and about completing their major. The Chair, enjoying free WiFi in a nearby coffee shop, responded from that make-shift office. (Somewhere, an alum is thinking "That's why she always sounded so caffeinated!!" ) The Department kept running because, at the end of the day, whether in 2005 or 2012, the Department is more flesh and bone than bricks and mortar. So much for the pause and stretch. Onward!

### Cruz Promoted (continued from page 1)

to be a source of positive energy, and enjoys helping them resolve problems. "Resolution" often means knowing which specific individuals can address arcane issues, and cut through red tape. His lengthy tenure at Tulane is a clear asset in this regard.

Asked what he enjoys about working with the *faculty*, Steve replies that it is gratifying working with a world class faculty whose personalities—however diverse—blend together into a genuinely nice group of people.

And the department faculty and students feel likewise about Steve. The San Antonio native's hearty laugh, quirky music, and fondness for chocolates make 2007 Stern a pleasant place to visit. Congrats on the promotion, Steve!!

[Oh. And that's a picture of Steve's lhasa apso, Cammie.]

### Did you know...

- That the School of Science & Engineering awarded 317 Bachelor's degrees in May 2012 ...and 110 of these degrees were in Psychology.
- That Tulane's Psi Chi chapter inducted a record number of 37 new members in 2012.
- That our first Master's degree was awarded one hundred years ago in 1912.
- That Dr. Ed Golob is a participant in an NIH Center for Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE) grant with the Center for Aging Studies
- That Dr. Michael Cunningham has been appointed as Associate Provost of Engaged Learning and Teaching.
- That Dr. Janet Ruscher has been appointed as Associate Dean for Graduate Programs in Science and Engineering.
- That 15 students currently are conducting senior honors theses in Psychology.
- That a psychology laboratory course no longer is required for the minor.
- That by Spring 2015, the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) will include questions drawn from social and behavioral sciences.
- That the School Psychology PhD program now offers certification in Trauma Focused School Psychology.
- That Dr. Stacy Overstreet has been appointed as Department Chair

## Keep up with the Tulane Department of Psychology

