

Undergraduate Research in Psychology

Elizabeth Nawrot, Ph.D

The MSUM Psychology Department has a long history of mentoring undergraduate student research. Our faculty take great pride in offering outstanding opportunities for students to participate in every aspect of the research process, from literature review and experimental design to data collection, conference presentation, and even publication. *The Red River Psychology Journal* is dedicated to showcasing the excellent work that our students produce.

In just the past few years, the numbers of students involved in research activities has been increasing. Between 30 and 40 students every year get to carry out their own original research projects through our Experimental Psychology class sequence Psy 330/430. In addition, about 20 students every year work with a faculty mentor on Directed Research (Psy 297) or Independent Research (Psy 497). Every single faculty member in the department has mentored student research or internship activities. As a result, our students regularly present their work at local and regional conferences including the MSUM Student Academic Conference, the Red River Psychology Conference, the Minnesota Undergraduate Conference, and the University of North Dakota Northern Lights Conference. And many have traveled across the U.S. and beyond for national and even international conferences, including The Midwest Psychological Society conference, the American Psychological Society conference, the Vision Sciences Society, the Pan-American/Iberian Meeting on Acoustics, the American Chemical Society National Meeting, the International Conference on

Infant Studies, and the Society for Research in Child Development to name a few.

To help recognize our students' achievements, we began offering three Departmental Awards to undergraduate students at both the Junior and Senior level. The Psychology Research Award and the Psychology Departmental Award include a plaque and \$150 (Junior award) or \$250 (Senior award) in funding to support psychology research and related activities. The Divecha Award for Developmental Science recognizes an undergraduate student for achievement in the field of developmental science. This award is funded by developmental psychologist and MSUM Distinguished Alumni Award winner Dr. Diana Divecha.

These experiences have helped to make our Psychology graduates very successful in a number of graduate degree programs across the U.S. Recently, our students have attended the University of Wisconsin-Stout, the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco, the School Psychology program at New Mexico State, the Institute for Child Development at UMN, the Counseling program at the University of South Dakota, the Social Cognition program at Ball State University, and the Clinical Doctoral program at Argosy University in the Twin Cities. Many other graduates stay close to home for graduate school in School Psychology or Counseling and Student Affairs here at MSUM, Sport & Exercise Psychology at MSU Mankato, Marriage and Family Therapy at NDSU and NDSU's Ph.D. program in Developmental Science.



Our students' success is in large part due to excellent faculty mentors in the Psychology Department. Our faculty have won MSUM Excellence Awards in every category including the Teaching Award (Malone, 2006), the Research Award (Kolotkin, 1996; Nickell, 2006; Nawrot, 2010; Hallford, 2011; Dalhouse, 2012), and the Service Award (Chalikia, 1995; Nawrot, 2010; Melroe, 2010).

Finally, so many of our student research activities, especially conference travel, could not take place without support from the Psychology Department and the

generosity of our alumni. On behalf of the Psychology Department and students, THANK YOU! Your support truly makes an important difference in the lives of our students. Many point to experiences such as conference travel and awards as the most valuable part about their undergraduate education. If you are interested in donating to the Psychology Department, to support one of our annual awards, or for student research in general, please contact the department chair for more information.