Welcome!

Alan Gittis, Chair/Professor of Psychology

Welcome to the Working Memory, the Westminster Psychology Department’s alumni newsletter. To reach friends over distances of space and time is an exciting proposition. Many of the newsletter’s readers have last sat with us in offices in Hoyt, Old Science Hall, or Turner House. Our shared common experience is that warm handshake at graduation. To us, that extension of our hands is holophrastic. In part it proudly lofts the fledglings. But its grasp also means to us that we want you to return someday, if only with a word of where you have roosted and nested. It is our hope that this news from us will remind you to send news of yourself.

The purpose of the articles within is not to convey the department’s professional productivity. Rather we hope these words serve to reinstate the fond memories we have of learning from each other.

Who is texting from New Wilmington these days? It is Dave Gray, emeritus professor; our faculty—Sandra Webster, Mandy Medvin, Kirk Lunnen, Jamie McMinn, Sherri Pataki, and yours truly, the editor. It is our staff—Diana Reed and Debi Roud in the preschool laboratory, Ron Webster on our electronic networks and Darlene McCoy, our secretary, and hence in charge of everything. We don’t just run a psychology program any more. We also have programs in human resources, neuroscience, child development and a cooperative program with Duquesne University in occupational therapy. We still maintain Childhood and Adolescence, an Abnormal offering, and continue with Learning, but we have lost Motivation. We reflect the times and the TV grid by offering Forensics, and Sex. Physiological Psychology became Psychobiology which became Behavioral Neuroscience. Our faculty oversees Peace Studies (Sherri Pataki) and all the other faculty (Sandra Webster is the Faculty Development Officer). Although we still look out for buggies when crossing the street, we also look nationally. Nationally, Sandra serves as an officer with the Council for Undergraduate Research, I will be on a committee of the Society for Neuroscience, Sherri has been recognized by the American Psychological Association for excellence in teaching; Mandy, Diana and Debi have worked victoriously to obtain national certification for our preschool, and Jamie’s and Kirk’s work can be viewed nationally in professional journals (with alumni on the byline!!).

Enjoy the newsy notes that follow and make my job as editor easier next time around by sending us news to share with all for future editions.

The Preschool Lab has achieved re-accreditation by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Along with the preschool staff and psychology department, the college’s administration, education department, physical plant and families of Westminster College Preschool Lab all contributed in accomplishing this goal. The Preschool Lab is one of the first programs in the country to earn the mark of quality represented by the reinvented NAEYC Accreditation system. NAEYC’s re-accreditation was granted on July 31, 2007.
This summer my family was lucky enough to obtain tickets to see the King Tut exhibit in Philadelphia, PA at the Franklin Institute. Both of my children and my daughter’s friend are budding Egyptologists, so we took them along so that they could answer any questions we might have, in line with the psychological research that children can be experts at any age. With the help of scenic countryside, snacks and a portable DVD player, seven hours later we were in Philadelphia. We were ready to explore!

The exhibit is beautifully designed to trace the history of the ruling family through six generations. Careful research and thought went into telling the story of the customs of the time through the artifacts, similar to any other science. The Egyptians were skilled artisans, and the artifacts are extremely well preserved. Much to my surprise, we learned that the Egyptians of the time had a hatred of the Nubians, who lived in Northern Africa. One bas relief showed Egyptians stomping down on the Nubians, who were on the bottom of the picture. A cane had a bound Nubian slave on the handle, to be grasped by the owner. Clearly, the psychological study of prejudice and conflict was relevant to the exhibit. Our family would have been happy to help the museum store some of the artifacts at our house—they were so beautiful and intricate—but instead, we went to the gift store.

My son’s books revealed that Howard Carter, who had been searching for King Tut's tomb since 1917, found nothing for five years. He managed to convince his patron, Lord Carnavon, to give him one more chance. After a few more months, the tomb was located. Howard’s story is a lesson in persistence and dedication, one that is relevant to life today.

Many lessons were learned while viewing this exhibit. Summer is a time for family vacations, for rejuvenation from the school year, and for expanding one’s horizons. I look forward to our next adventure.
David Gray retired from the College in 2003 after 38 years in the Psychology Department. The separation from the College was well timed, but he misses his colleagues and students. Fortunately he still keeps in touch.

He and his wife Phyllis have had extra time enjoying family birthdays, holidays, and special celebrations. Their oldest daughter, Amy, oversees an active community theatre fifty miles above New York City which provides a nice excuse to be with her family, see some of the theatre productions, and explore the beautiful Hudson River valley. Dave helped them build a large chimney and Rumford fireplace for their new addition to their home. Their second daughter, Lisa, lives with her family in Pittsburgh which allows much enjoyment watching the two boys play their sports. Gwen and her family have closed the geographical gap by moving from Tucson, Arizona to take a teaching post in English at Mount Union College in Alliance, Ohio this past year. It has been fun taking their children swimming this summer and eating blueberries together. Their fourth child, Josh, married a Japanese woman two years ago involving a wonderful wedding, reception, and an ever expanding circle of international family and friends. That calls for a visit to Keiko’s family in Japan this fall.

The old coal mining valleys in southern Wales beckoned in 2004. One of their great-grandfathers came from that region. The Wales trip also included a grand week in a cottage overlooking the Sea of Ireland in a tiny village fixed forever in a very old lifestyle.

Mounted archery has led to David purchasing a Quarter Horse to practice the discipline and train youth in the area. He has done some informal mounted archery instruction in the Westminster equestrian gym class at Little Neshannock Stables. His book on Bows of the World has sold out, and he and his fellow mounted archers will announce a new work this fall entitled, Mounted Archery in the Americas. Dave is the treasurer of a new association called the Mounted Archery Association of the Americas. He and his friends are regular contributors to traditional archery magazines. The Grays still run the Krackow Company which makes very traditional archery equipment from around the world available to the international community.

The flower gardens in the back yard take love and attention. Birds, butterflies, and wild turkeys are attracted and help to bring the place to life. David serves as the mushroom manure hauler and assistant mulch spreader.

Last year was a down year with David going through six months of chemo therapy for lymphoma, and thankfully he is now on the lighter side of the tunnel. David and Phyllis celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in late August of this year in Europe and had a superb time. He says that Westminster and the Psychology Department will always be in his heart.
I have spent the last three years in Denmark, pursuing a PhD in Neuroscience. During this time, I have grown especially fond of the Danes, their enthusiasm for bicycles, cheese, and good healthcare. I have assimilated nicely into the welcoming culture of Denmark, so much so that occasionally I receive a compliment that still surprises me: You speak English very well.

All things considered, living abroad is at times very exciting, but also, at times, quite challenging. Mastering the Danish language and integrating into the society proved to be a rewarding feat. As a socialized country, Denmark pays one of the highest taxes in the world for such luxuries as free health care and education as well as generous unemployment and pension benefits. Recently, a UNESCO study ranked Denmark as the happiest nation on earth. The society also places emphasis on family life in which new mothers can expect to have almost one year of maternity leave. Do not forget the minimum six weeks mandatory holiday for all. You can also expect to see a traffic jam of bicycles during the morning commute. In a recent issue of *Travel and Leisure*, Aarhus was highlighted as a city “making an impressive bid for the limelight.”

In 2005, I was accepted as a Ph.D. student to Aarhus University in Aarhus, Denmark. I am currently involved in a brain imaging study investigating addiction, specifically pathological gambling. I have had the opportunity to present my work in Atlanta, Las Vegas, Denmark, Sweden and continued under the exceptional mentorship of Dr. Alan Gittis at Westminster. Dr. Gittis and I presented the results from my senior thesis titled “Induction of compulsive features in maternal behavior via chronic quinpirole administration in the rat” in 2002 at the annual Society of Neuroscience Meeting in Orlando, Florida. Later the opportunity arose for me to attend the University of Pennsylvania and pursue a Master’s Degree in Interdisciplinary Science. At Penn, I was able to expand my interests in forensic anthropology and bioethics, and apply these fields to neuroscience. I investigated the remains from the ancient Hasanlu settlement. The purpose was to determine inhabitants versus invaders based on cranial and facial structure, cause of death and isotope analysis of bone composition. My current Ph.D. study examines neuroreceptor activity and brain energy metabolism in both male and female pathological gamblers. Pathological gambling or “ludomania” as it is called in Danish has become an increasing problem, as this type of lifestyle does not fit the conventional Danish way of life.

Upon completion of my graduate degree, I hope to continue my work through bioethics and neuroscience, focusing on the new field of NeuroLaw, where brain imaging may come to play a role in the judicial system. Neuroscientists are now being called to testify about deviant behavior detected by various brain imaging techniques, which may manifest as evidence in criminal behavior.

Looking back at my studies in neuroscience and the journeys in which they have taken me, I realize that I can attribute the opportunities that have become available to me from my time at Westminster. There, I was able to develop a basic knowledge for the field and a desire to explore it in every aspect of life. The support I received there, both as a student and as a member of the Westminster family, provided me with the strength and courage to follow that knowledge and desire.
Global Perspectives
Sherri Pataki, Assistant Professor of Psychology

To increase student’s understanding of diversity, one of Dr. Sherri Pataki’s goals in teaching Psychology of Women last semester was to give students a global perspective on gender and women’s issues. Rather than discussing cross-cultural issues broadly, she decided to focus on the lives of women in Africa to give students the opportunity to learn about a culture in which they knew very little.

To enable students to learn about the lives of African women in the most accurate and personal way possible, Dr. Pataki contacted a girl’s school in Kitale, Kenya, using the internet resource www.epals.com which connects classrooms around the world. Using Epals, she contacted Aloys Nyagechi at the Kitale Girl’s Academy in Kenya and asked if his class would correspond with hers about their culture, personal lives, and the role of women. This became a very enriching class experience. The individual letters from Kenya were full of detail and reflected the unique personality of each student. They provided first-hand perspectives on topics such as female circumcision, property rights, schooling, family, and education. The girl’s academy in Kenya recently began a women’s basketball team and needed training materials. Through Nicole Fee (class of 2007), the Psychology of Women class was able to send training materials, team shirts, and backpacks to each woman on the Kenyan team which were all generously donated by the Westminster College Women’s Basketball team, and other students sent books and materials related to understanding American culture.

The class also learned from local speakers. Westminster student Ann Ebhojiaye (class of 2008) whose family is from Nigeria came to speak about her personal experiences in Africa. Chub Dietz, a Pittsburgh resident who started a non-profit organization to provide healthcare, schooling, and housing in Kenya (Rainbow Christian Missions) came to speak with the class as part of a Peace Studies Coffeehouse. Following his presentation, he gave the class a copy of unpublished, personal life stories written by a group of Kenyan women infected with HIV as a way to share their life stories with their children. Reading these accounts personalized the AIDS epidemic in a way that statistics never could and many students decided to write personal notes of thanks and encouragement to these women.

This process gave students the opportunity to understand gender and women’s issues from a truly global perspective. Based on this class experience, Dr. Pataki received the Mary Walsh Roth Teaching the Psychology of Women Award for innovative teaching related to diversity. She received this award at the 115th Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association in San Francisco, California, August 2007.
Adventures in Data

Sandra K. Webster, Professor of Psychology

The past year finally saw the publication (again) of my textbook, *Hand in Hand: Research Design and Statistics in the Behavioral Sciences*. Yes, it’s the same basic textbook that many of you had, in various self-published forms and briefly from the online publisher, OpenMind. OpenMind was bought out by Atomic Dog, who was bought out by Thomson. The picture is of me with my book at the publisher’s display at the American Psychological Association meeting in San Francisco this August. It’s very nice to finally see it in print. My students are taking the online quizzes through the publisher’s textbook support site.

My other big APA activity (after seeing Sherri Pataki receive the Teaching Award from the Psychology of Women Division) was presenting a teaching poster on “Being the Data.” Last year’s Psych 201 class learned about dispersion (standard deviation, remember!) and basic hypothesis testing (introduction to the t-test) by acting as data points on a graph. The teaching activity seemed to increase students’ understanding of the concepts without additional lecture. You see us standing in the Hoyt lobby after we’ve been assigned random data points from independent distributions, null hypothesis is false. I’ve got an article about the demonstrations under review at the journal, *Teaching of Psychology*.

This year my new challenge for Psych 201 is the pie challenge. Instead of challenging the students to earn pie by having the entire class get the APA reference citation style correct, the challenge is for me to include enough teaching activities each week that by the time they turn in their papers they can get it. I’ll let you know how it goes and what type of pie they picked out in the next newsletter.
Preschool Lab’s 3rd Annual Summer Camp for Kids
Diana Reed, WCPL Head Teacher & Debi Roud, WCPL Teacher

Kids love art! Whether it’s a sticky gob of paint, paper and glue or a gallery masterpiece, art allows children to explore and discover their world.

The Westminster College Pre-school Lab presented its third annual summer camp for kids on June 25-29, 2007. The hands-on camp program encouraged children to learn about the arts through visiting with guest artisans, experimenting with different mediums and creatively expressing themselves through art.

Day one of the camp highlighted tie-dye art with local “expert” Stephanie Corrette-Bennett of Westminster College. She demonstrated different methods of dipping cloth and explained how dyes work. The children tie-dyed scarves, created stained glass lanterns and began a week-long ocean art project. Day two was a day of carpentry with Jim Moose of Moose Wood Furniture. After showing the children his craft he led them in making their own hand-made stools from sassafras wood. Plenty of hammering happened at the woodworking table to make nail collages! The third day highlighted ceramic art with Pat Logue of Kingfisher Studio in Volant. A field trip to the college’s ceramic department allowed the children to watch Pat demonstrate throwing pots on a wheel and to create their own ceramic face sculptures. On day four the artist was Laura Stuart-Smith. “Miss Laura” displays her work at the Blue Heron Gallery in Volant and offered her creative mixed media artwork to the camp. Follow-up activities included recycled jewelry and jewelry boxes, and CD-ROM fish art. Day five culminated the week with artist Tom McNickel. His beautiful watercolor paintings have been nationally displayed and the children had the opportunity to learn from his expertise.

The Summer Arts Camp for Kids was sponsored by the Grable Foundation of Pittsburgh and the Drinko Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, and collaborated with the Westminster College Education Department Summer Teachers Academy. The camp was taught by preschool teachers Diana Reed, Debi Roud, and college aide Ali Szabo.
Recent Faculty Publications


- **Webster, Sandra K.; McMinn, Jamie; Lunnen, Kirk; Medvin, Mandy; Pataki, Sherri; Gittis, Alan.** “Multi-Level Integration of Student Research in a Psychology/Neuroscience Curriculum” published in Developing and Sustaining a Research-Supportive Curriculum: A Compendium of Successful Practices. K. Karukstis & T. Elgin, eds. Published by the Council on Undergraduate Research