

Newsletter

Fall 2024



DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

TEXAS TECH
College of Arts & Sciences

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Welcome to the Fall 2024 edition of the Department of Psychological Sciences' newsletter! I hope you and yours are doing well.

I want to welcome our new faculty members, graduate students, and undergraduate students. You can find information about them throughout this newsletter. I am confident each will make a positive impact on our department community.

Over the summer, we moved into our spaces in the new Academic Sciences Building, which is a truly wonderful facility. You can see the new building and clips from its dedication in this video [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hh_WbDswx4I]. Our spaces include 2 offices, 10 research laboratories, 8 shareable data collection rooms, and a graduate student workspace. We also share a state-of-the-art facility for collecting, processing, and storing biological samples, as well as an excellent new computer classroom.

Right before the semester started, we moved everyone out of the south portion of the first floor of the Psychological Sciences Building (i.e., the first floor in the original, four-story portion of the building). After that, renovations began. Specifically, the renovation crew demolished the interior of the south portion of the first floor, as well as select portions of the basement and second floor. Since then, the renovation crew installed the new walls in the south portion of the first floor and is now installing sheet rock. We expect the renovations of the south portion of the first floor to be completed around March 2025. After that, we will move everyone back into the south portion of the first floor and the renovation crew will demolish and redo the interior of the north portion of the first floor (i.e., the single-story portion of the first floor). That phase of the renovations is expected to be completed around September 2025. Once all is said and done, the whole first floor and select portions of the basement, second, third, and fourth floors will be completely redone. We appreciate the university's tremendous support for our department. Images of construction are available on [page 6](#).

As always, you can visit [<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/psy/media/>] to stay abreast of department news, and [<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/psy/about/donate.php>] to find ways to support our department's ability to train the next generation of psychological scientists and practitioners. Please consider giving if you are able. Your support enables us to do things we simply could not do otherwise.

If you are on LinkedIn, please join the Texas Tech University Psychological Sciences Alumni Group [<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8998067/>] and encourage your fellow alumni to do so as well. We hope this group will be a hub for the TTU Psychological Sciences network. Our department has a tremendous network and we hope this group will help to better connect its members.

If you are ever in Lubbock, please stop by the department. I would love a chance to catch up. You are always welcome here.

Dr. Keith S. Jones

Dr. Piña-Watson's "Championship Season"



Front Row (L-R): Emily Piña (UG-McNair & TrUE Scholar); Aundrea Garcia (GR); Savannah Treviño (UG-McNair Scholar); Daisy Barrientos (UG-TrUE Scholar); George Recinos (UG); Elijah Velasquez (UG Alumni—Now GR in Clinical Psyc at Purdue)
Back Row (L-R): Erica Martinez (GR); Gisel Suarez-Bonilla (GR Alumni—Now Faculty at Augsburg University); Dr. Brandy Piña-Watson; Daniela Navarro Verdugo (GR); Samantha Gonzalez (GR); Caleb Cartwright (UG)

Dr. Brandy Piña-Watson did a wonderful job of showcasing Red Raider Research at a major conference this fall. Dr. Piña-Watson took a large group of TTU-based scholars from her lab with her to attend the National Latinx Psychological Association Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

TrUE Scholar Daisy Barrientos was awarded \$500 from TrUE, Texas Tech University's Transformative Undergraduate Experiences program. Daisy also received \$500 from donations to the Department of Psychological Sciences Undergraduate Research Fund. Thanks to everyone who donated. Your donations make it possible for students like Daisy to have these important experiences. If you would like to donate, you may do so here [\[link\]](#).

The grants did not stop with Daisy Barrientos. Emily Piña and Savannah Treviño, 2 McNair scholars from Dr. Piña-Watson's lab, were also recipients of a travel award from the McNair Scholars Program to cover the expenses of attending the conference.

Awards & Grants



Grant Awarded

Title: Ableism as a Mechanism of Physical and Mental Health Inequities Among Children with Visual Impairment

Funding Agency: National Eye Institute (NIH)

Total Budget: \$3,672,739

Investigators: Adam Schmidt (MPI), Sarah Victor (MPI), Jason Van Allen (Co-I), Rona Pogrund (School of Education, Co-I)

Duration: 9/1/2024-4/30/2029

Pictured, Left to Right: Dr. Adam Schmidt, Dr. Sarah Victor.

Drs. Adam Schmidt and Sarah Victor, Associate Professors of Clinical Psychology at Texas Tech, are Principal Investigators on a newly funded research grant from the National Eye Institute, a division of the National Institutes of Health. The \$3.6 million dollar grant will fund a five-year study on the health and well-being of children who are blind or visually impaired (CBVI) by building a first-of-its-kind national cohort of 500 CBVI. Although visual impairment impacts approximately 3% of American children, almost no research has focused on the psychosocial experiences of CBVI or potential contributors to the disproportionate burden of psychiatric and physical health concerns they face.

In addition to Drs. Victor and Schmidt, the Youth VIEW (Visual Impairment, Equity, and Well-being) team includes Dr. Jason Van Allen (TTU Psychological Sciences), Dr. Rona Pogrund (TTU School of Education), Dr. Katie Wang (Yale University), Dr. Leslie Brick (Brown University), and Dr. Gordon Legge (University of Minnesota).



Title: Improving Brief Assessment of Suicidal Thoughts and Behaviors in Youth: An Engaged, Stakeholder-Informed Approach to Measure Development, Testing, and Implementation

Funding Agency: National Institute of Mental Health

Investigators: Kirsten Christensen (PI), Sarah Victor (Faculty Sponsor)

Total Budget: \$91,983

Duration: 2024-2026

Pictured: Kirsten Christensen

Kirsten Christensen (faculty mentor: Dr. Sarah Victor) received a NIMH F31 predoctoral fellowship to support her dissertation research and training. The funded project will (1) develop a pool of clear, interpretable items to assess youths' experiences with suicidal thoughts and behaviors (STBs) using cognitive interviewing, (2) examine psychometric properties of the resulting set of single-item STB measures, and (3) identify factors that impact responses beyond item interpretation through an implementation science framework. Results of this study will provide recommendations for brief assessment of STBs in research and clinical contexts.

New Faculty Members



Dr. Alyssa Clements-Hickman

Lecturer
Undergraduate Studies

[More Information](#)



Dr. Balagopal Raveendranath

Assistant Professor
Human Factors

[More Information](#)



Dr. Madhuri Ramasubramanian

Assistant Professor
Human Factors

[More Information](#)



Dr. Haram Kim

Assistant Professor
Counseling

[More Information](#)



Dr. Krista Titone

Lecturer
Undergraduate Studies

[More Information](#)



Dr. Elaine Augustine

Lecturer
Undergraduate Studies

[More Information](#)

New Psychological Sciences Graduate Students

New Experimental Graduate Students

Front row: Sean Patmer, Kaid Marek, Zehra Haque, Antwan Williams, Micha Wolverton, Bridget Cunningham

Back row: Dylan Daniel, Logan Bruntmyer, Neptaly Trujillo, Spencer Onstot, Thomas Laskowski, Nadyezhda Taylor

Not pictured: Mahsa Rafiee



New Clinical Graduate Students

Front row: Natasha Lindert, Swanaya Gurjar

Back row: Alana Johnston, Regan Sweeney, Emma Quarles, Courtney Gotdenberg, Jeremiah Jones



New Counseling Graduate Students

Left to right: Alexis Flores, Alyssa Eberhart, Erica Martinez, Evan Moon, Parker Gardner, Tina Greene



Department News: Renovations In Progress



Renovation of the old clinic space



Copy room demolitions nearing completion



Framing in the old 119 hallway



Framing begins in the old clinic space

Recruitment

Our American Psychological Association (APA) accredited doctoral programs in **Clinical Psychology & Counseling Psychology**, and the programs in **Experimental Psychology** (Cognition/Cognitive Neuroscience, Social Psychology, and HFES accredited Human Factors) **wish to continue to recruit and enroll the VERY BEST students each year!**

Please help make students you may know aware of these programs and the opportunities for an outstanding graduate education at TTU. Encourage them to visit our department website, with special attention to our graduate programs' pages.

Interested students may address questions to our program directors listed below. They may also contact individual faculty for opportunities in their unique areas. That complete listing along with their areas of focus may be found [here](#).

Experimental

Dr. Jessica Alquist
jessica.alquist@ttu.edu

Counseling

Dr. Sheila Garos
sheila.garos@ttu.edu

Clinical

Dr. Jason Van Allen
jason.vanallen@ttu.edu

Final Notes

Contribute to the Department

There are many ways to make a gift to the Department of Psychological Sciences. May we count on your financial investment in the students and faculty of the Department? Funds may be used for a variety of purposes including scholarships, graduate dissertation support, research, service, and outreach initiatives.

To make a donation, please visit our *[Donate Page](#)*.

Follow us throughout the year on social media!

