Psychology Division Newsletter

A Publication of a Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research

Fall 2025

The Psychology Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research provides networking opportunities, activities, and resources to assist psychology administrators, faculty members, students, practitioners, and others in advancing undergraduate research.

Chair: Karen L. Gunther (Wabash College)

Newsletter Team: Amy M. Buddie (Kennesaw State University) & Tsu-Ming Chiang (Georgia College & State University)

Greetings from the Chair

Greetings CUR Psych Members! I hope you had a relaxing and/or productive summer!

We're excited in this newsletter to share with you teaching tips for reading primary research articles and on using generative AI in undergraduate research. If you have tips you would like to share, please send them to me (guntherk@wabash.edu), and we can include them in future newsletters.

We have also opened our calls for applications for our student research/travel award (deadline October 10), and our mid-career mentor award (deadline October 15). See below, and the CUR website, for additional information. We will share the experiences of the student winners in our spring newsletter, and the winner of the mentor award will give a virtual talk sometime in the spring. These are always inspirational; we could use some positive stories of research experiences this year!

We also have openings amongst the elected representatives of the division! These can be self-nominations. See the CUR website for more information (https://www.cur.org/about/leadership/elections/). We'd love to have you join us. In this newsletter, we share introductions of our two newest representatives, Danica Kulibert and Liz Preas.

I hope you have a fruitful semester.

Karen L. Gunther, PhD
CUR Psychology Division Chair
Professor of Psychology
Chair, Neuroscience Minor
Wabash College

CUR Psychology Division: Mid-Career Mentoring Award

Call for Nominations: The Psychology Division of the Council on Undergraduate Research requests nominations for a Mid-Career Mentoring Award. This award is for a CUR Psychology Division member who has influenced undergraduate research through their own research, through scholarly or creative projects with undergraduates, and/or through demonstrated leadership activities. The award consists of $500. In addition, the awardee will have the opportunity to present their research mentorship style and philosophy with the CUR community and the profile and accomplishments of the awardee will be featured on the Psychology Division's website.

Eligibility: Any member of CUR may nominate any active CUR Psychology Division member for the award. Self-nominations are also accepted. Nomination materials should elaborate on the perspectives, innovation, and value-added to undergraduate research.

Please visit the CUR Psychology Division Mid-Career Mentoring Award website for more information.

Application Deadline: October 15, 2025.

Contact the CUR Psychology MCMA-Committee Chair, Nestor Matthews (matthewsn@denison.edu), with questions.

Psychology Undergraduate Student Research or Presentation Awards

The CUR Psychology Division is offering a limited number of research (e.g., supplies or expenses) or presentation (travel/conference registration) awards for undergraduate students conducting original psychological research (up to $450 per project).

Please visit the Psychology Undergraduate Student Research or Presentation Awards website for more information.

Application Deadline: October 10, 2025.

Contact the CUR Psychology Student Research Award Chair, Sara Goodman (sgoodman@sjfc.edu), with questions.

Meet Our New Representatives

Danica Kulibert, PhD (https://namedrop.io/danicakulibert)
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychological Science
Kennesaw State University, Georgia

Danica is a social psychologist and the lab director for the Social Perceptions and Intergroup Relations (SPAIR) Lab. They often use Social Identity Theory and Intergroup Contact Theory to better understand how the groups that people are a part of impact their perceptions of the world. Their research focuses on diversity and equity of social groups and how to address systemic issues that marginalized groups face. Currently, Dr. Kulibert conducts research focusing on four broad domains:

- Perceptions of Discrimination and Sexual Harassment: What are potential barriers that victims with different social identities face when coming forward with discrimination and/or sexual harassment claims?
- Understanding Meta-Perceptions: When do meta-perceptions (i.e., how one social group thinks another social group views them) impact prejudice-reduction methods?
- Political Attitudes and Behaviors: How well do social psychology concepts and interventions apply to a political context?
- Applied Intervention/Assessment: In what context can social psychology theories and research methods translate to real-world settings (e.g., workplaces, hospitals, colleges)?

Elizabeth J. Preas, Ph.D., BCBA-D, LBA, LPC (*she/her/hers*)
Assistant Professor
Psychology
Austin College, Sherman, TX

Dr. Liz Preas is an Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Psychology Department at Austin College. Dr. Preas is also a licensed professional counselor and board certified behavior analyst – doctoral level. Her research focuses on developing and evaluating evidence-based interventions to support individuals with autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders, with an emphasis on daily living skills, language acquisition, and emergent responding. She is particularly interested in caregiver and staff training, treatment integrity, and socially valid practices that improve service delivery across home, school, and clinical settings. Additional research areas include tolerance training procedures, the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and the involvement of treatment team members—such as teachers and caregivers—in implementing interventions. Dr. Preas' research also explores how to design effective teaching strategies that promote generalization, skill maintenance, and meaningful outcomes for individuals with neurodevelopmental disorders.

Teaching Tips

Nestor Matthews, PhD
Professor and Chair of Neuroscience
Denison University, Granville, OH

Tips for Reading Primary Research Articles

Undergraduate students who are new to research must learn many new skills. One foundational skill is the ability to read primary research articles well. This takes practice. And, new students are often unsure about how to start. The following tips have helped many of my undergraduate research students make sense out of primary research articles, which generally are written by PhDs for PhDs.

1. **See the Big Picture first. This will help you organize subsequent details.** Read the title and abstract carefully twice before you do anything else! Before reading the text, look at the figures and tables in sequence. Also read the captions. How do the figures and tables support the title and the abstract?
2. **Read through the text the first time, looking for purpose. Don't get bogged down in details.** Take advantage of the fact that the first sentence in each paragraph is topical, and sets up the rest. Don't get hung-up on vocabulary you don't understand. Use a highlighter to mark unfamiliar vocabulary.
3. **Deepen your understanding of the details.** Revisit your highlighted vocabulary, and prioritize the words or acronyms that occur most frequently and/or will further your understanding the most. Remember that one's understanding of an article is a continuous variable, rather than all-or-none. Your mantra is, **"I don't have to understand EVERYTHING, I can understand SOMETHING".** See how far you can push your intellect, even if many ideas remain unclear.
4. **Contextualize and question the article.** Put the article in a broader context by taking advantage of what you learned in prior courses. Here are some sample questions to contemplate. What type of design was used (survey, observation, experiment, quasi-experiment, within-subject, between-subject, mixed, small n)? Was the setting based in a lab or "in the field", and what pros and cons did that generate? Does the study better exemplify basic research or applied research? Were the operational definitions reasonable? Was the sampling reasonable, given the research question? To what extent can the findings generalize to other people/animals, and to other settings and/or stimulus conditions? Was the choice of statistical tests appropriate? What alternate statistical methods might be possible or advantageous?
5. **How does the article fare on the following scientific criteria?**
   - Generalizability – To what extent does the research have an impact beyond the specifics investigated in the study?
   - Originality – To what extent does the research offer something new or innovative?
   - Precision – Was the research sufficiently specific (in operational definitions, measurements, interpretive caution) to be impactful?
   - Falsifiability – If the work was not simply descriptive (there's nothing wrong with purely descriptive work), could the hypotheses *really* have been disconfirmed, in principle?
   - Replication – Is the research replicable? Identify a "near replication" that would add new information.

Following these steps might seem formulaic. However, the steps provide students with a structure for understanding articles that might otherwise seem inaccessible.

Chrysalis L. Wright, PhD
Senior Lecturer in Psychology
University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL

The Use of Generative AI in Undergraduate Research

ChatGPT is pretty much everywhere, and students use it frequently. This can have implications for how generative AI impacts the undergraduate research process. There are various tasks that undergraduate students can work on with their faculty mentor, such as locating peer-reviewed research articles, summarizing articles, conducting data analysis, and writing. All of these tasks are important aspects of the research process. Mentors need to clearly outline their lab's policy when it comes to the use of generative AI and train mentees on ethical and appropriate use.

Here are some key points to keep in mind to maintain the integrity of the research:

Faculty mentors are ultimately responsible for their mentees and the work that emerges from the mentorship. The possibility of generative AI use increases the responsibility of mentors to verify the accuracy of work and confirm the authorship of any writing.

Faculty mentors are responsible for explaining and accurately disclosing the research process, not just in the initial stages to their IRB but also during dissemination. Students could use generative AI tools, but not fully document when and how it was used, putting research at risk.

While asking undergraduate mentees to locate, read, and summarize peer-reviewed research on a topic is a common practice, so is using ChatGPT among college students. Students may search generative AI for articles, instead of PsycINFO, leading to lower-quality research being sourced. Students could also upload full articles directly into ChatGPT and ask it to provide summaries for them. This could publicly release that content, leading to copyright and legal violations.

While generative AI seems here to stay, students (and faculty mentors) may not fully understand how such tools function and how they source information. This means that measures to prevent bias by generative AI tools may be limited.

There are various policies in place regarding research ethics, writing guidelines for specific journals, and institution policies that students are not likely to be aware of, meaning that their use of generative AI could unknowingly violate these policies.

Outright banning the use of generative AI may seem ideal, but it isn't very realistic. Instead, faculty mentors need to take measures with their undergraduate mentees to preserve the research process. Faculty can develop specific guidelines on when and how generative AI can be used in the research process, emphasizing that the use of AI requires extensive documentation, including the exact phrase of the prompt, as well as the output, the exact generative AI program used, and so on. Undergraduate students also need to ensure that any output is verified for accuracy, as ChatGPT can provide information that doesn't exist or is fake. Training on what generative AI is, how it sources and summarizes information, along with any applicable laws and institution policies, is also needed. Additional information related to the use of AI in research can be found in the links below.

- How to cite AI using APA: How to cite ChatGPT
- APA policies regarding generative AI: APA Journals policy on generative AI: Additional guidance
- AI in research and writing: The promise and perils of using AI for research and writing