

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH DAKOTA PSYCHOLOGY

Summer 2025 Newsletter



WELCOME FROM THE CHAIR

Andre Kehn, Ph.D.

I am honored to introduce myself as the new Chair of the Department of Psychology at UND. I stepped into this role last July with a deep appreciation for the department's history, the excellence of our students and faculty, and the vibrant support of our alumni.

This year brought about several changes for the department. First, one of our longtime administrative assistants, Lauri Hanson, retired. We said a heartfelt and bittersweet goodbye with a surprise party. We also welcomed Dr. Alison Kelly as the new Director of our Forensic Graduate Programs and received notice that Dr. Travis Clark earned promotion to Teaching Associate Professor. Rumors about the next home for the department continue to circulate, but for now, we remain in Columbia Hall.

Throughout the year, I gained a greater understanding for all of our programs and the dedication of our faculty to provide the best educational experience possible for our undergraduate and graduate students. As such, it is exciting to share these departmental updates, while those elements that ensure a quality Psychology Department remain the same. Special thanks to Drs. Joelle Ruthig and Heather Terrell for putting together this newsletter.

Andre

LAURI HANSON RETIREMENT

After 37 years of working at UND, Lauri Hanson officially retired in January.

As an administrative staff member in the Psychology department, Lauri spent many years and countless hours assisting faculty and students with travel reimbursements, purchasing, tuition waivers, and award distributions.

Although we will miss her warm, generous nature and her great sense of humor, we know she is excited to take on the new adventures of retirement and spend more time with her grandchildren!



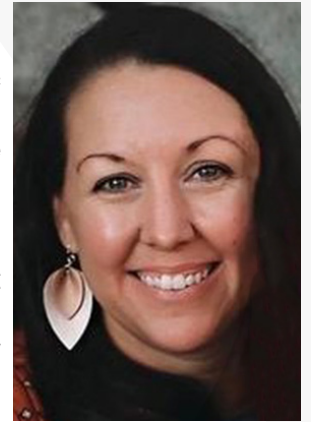
NEW DIRECTOR SPOTLIGHT

Hi everyone! I'm **Dr. Alison Kelly**, and I transitioned into the role of **Director of Forensic Psychology graduate programs** in July 2024. This past year has largely been focused on learning the ropes, and it's been rewarding to take on a greater role in supporting the development of our students and programs, as well as in recruiting prospective students.

Some highlights from the past year include adding a new core forensic faculty member, Dr. Tiffany Russell; celebrating research presentations by our M.S. students and faculty at both the Northern Lights and American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) conferences; and admitting two new students to our on-campus M.S. program, along with more than 50 new students to our online M.A. program.

We were also thrilled to award the first student scholarship from the Terrance Memorial Endowment, which honors the legacy of former faculty member and forensic program director Dr. Cheryl Terrance. Congratulations to Jasper Schmidtwood on being this year's recipient!

Looking ahead, I'm excited to continue growing our programs and promoting the fantastic work of our forensic faculty and students!



ALUMNI SNAPSHOT

What are they doing now?



Dr. Abigail Kroke graduated from the General/Experimental Psychology doctoral program in May 2023. After graduation, she started her tenure-track position as an Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Illinois at Springfield.

In her new faculty position, Dr. Kroke teaches Principles of Psychology, Research Methods, Social Psychology, Social Influence, and Psychology of Gender, she engages in research and mentors undergraduate research assistants, and she serves on committees in the department, university, and larger UI system. Part of this service includes the Psychology Department's Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DISJ) committee, which recently created a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice (DEISJ)-informed syllabus template, leading the University in DEISJ efforts.

Dr. Jenna Laurin graduated from the General/Experimental program in 2023 and just completed her second year as an Assistant Professor at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM).



Jenna teaches in the undergraduate program, and is assigned to teach the developmental courses, which include Developmental (lifespan) Psychology, Child/Adolescent Psychology, and Adulthood & Aging. The faculty all take turns with the statistics/research methods sequence, so she has also been teaching Experimental Methods this year and loving it! She will also be taking over the advisor position for the Psychology Club and Psi Chi chapter in the fall.

Jenna's research lab just wrapped up a busy conference season. Her undergraduate students recently presented research on enacted abortion stigma at the Midwest Psychological Association (MPA) conference, MSUM's Student Academic Conference, and the Red River Psychology Conference. She also researches the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, and her lab just started working on a study assessing self-esteem and self-efficacy in children with craniofacial birth defects.

SPOTLIGHT ON FACULTY RESEARCH

UND Research Team Approved for Clinical Trials

With the permission and support from College of Arts & Sciences dean, Brad Rundquist, the Psychology department has enrolled to conduct clinical trials for the Pediatric Eye Disease Group (PEDIG) that is funded through the NIH/NIE.

The Pediatric Eye Disease Group (PEDIG) was formed by the National Eye Institute (NEI) in 1997 as a collaborative network dedicated to facilitating multicenter clinical research in strabismus, amblyopia and other eye disorders in children. The PEDIG group receives millions of dollars in NIH funding annually and typically has several ongoing research projects. The Jaeb Center for Health Research is the coordinating center (data center) which organizes PEDIG studies.

UND is the first site in North Dakota to receive PEDIG approval to conduct clinical trials of various treatment procedures for children with various eye conditions such as strabismus, amblyopia, esotropia, exotropia and others. The research team is in the process of recruiting families to participate in randomized trials of dichoptic treatment for amblyopia ("lazy eye"). The trials, studying treatments for children between age 4 and 12, range from 18 to 26 weeks and involve virtual reality headsets.

Dr. Biberdorf, O.D. (formerly of Valley Vision Clinic) has been approved by the PEDIG group to be the principal investigator (PI) for all of the studies conducted at the UND site, based at the Psychology Department. Dmitri Poltavski, Ph.D., a vision researcher and a Professor of Psychology at UND, is the overall site coordinator responsible for personnel protocol trainings, equipment set up, grant management and liaising between the college, University and the Jaeb Center for Health Research. Carolina Praus Poltavski, optometric vision therapist, has been approved and certified to be the Clinical Site Coordinator in charge of study-specific examination and treatment procedures and data entry.



POST-DOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWS



Jordan Jaegar

I am a recent doctoral graduate from the College of Education and Human Development at the University of North Dakota, where I also earned a Master of Public Health in Population Health Research and Analytics. With a strong interest in data science, I sought a postdoctoral

opportunity that would deepen my research training—and the position in the Violence, Identity, and Personality (VIP) Lab, led by Dr. Tiffany Russell, has exceeded all of his expectations. Dr. Russell is a clinical psychologist with expertise in violence, personality, and mental health among LGBTQ+ populations. In addition to her academic role, she runs a forensic clinic offering a variety of civil and criminal forensic services.



Utkarsh Gupta

Utkarsh started his journey as a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Psychology at UND from January 2024. As a cognitive neuroscience researcher, his research focuses on investigating the neuroscientific underpinning of memory, mental workload, attention, and bodily self-

consciousness. Working under the supervision of Dr. Dmitri Poltavski and Dr. Thomas Petros, he got the opportunity to actively work on multiple ongoing research projects at their labs including interdepartmental collaborative projects and NASA EPSCoR funded project. He has also established research collaborations with other departments at UND including Computational Research Center, Department of Biomedical Engineering and Department of Communication. Additionally, he was given the opportunity to apply for multiple federal and non-federal grants as PI or Co-PI which are currently under review. One of the grant applications includes his ambitious 3-year project as a PI on NSF CogNeuro grant to investigate the behavioral and neural associations between memory and bodily self-consciousness. At Dr Poltavski's and Dr Petros's labs, he utilizes various basic and advanced psychophysiological, neuroimaging and neuromodulation tools for his research. He further plans to explore other state-of-the-art cognitive neuroscience tools including eye-tracking, virtual/

The VIP Lab focuses on the intersection of identity, mental health, and violence perpetration. When I joined, the lab had just concluded a nationwide data collection effort on mental health among LGBTQ+ individuals. We are now using this dataset to develop a new measure: the Concerns about Extremist and Radicalized Violence (CERV) Scale. We also recently submitted a manuscript to the Journal of Homosexuality titled "If You Can't Beat 'Em, Join 'Em?: The Effects of Radicalized Violence Exposure on Bisexual and Gay Men's Substance Use." This rich dataset has opened the door to many ongoing and future research projects.

As part of the Behavioral Health Initiative (BHI), I've contributed to several grant submissions, including an AHRQ grant focused on improving mental health care in North Dakota and a Gamma Mu Foundation grant studying intimate partner violence among lesbian and bisexual women. I'm also managing a longitudinal study on sleep and substance use among college students. While the research has been incredibly rewarding, the most meaningful part of this role has been mentoring students in the lab and watching them grow as young scholars. When my postdoc concludes, I hope to continue using data to improve mental health outcomes in rural communities—ideally through work with the state or a public health initiative.

augmented reality, and data from the Human Connectome Project. Most recently, he also had the opportunity to start an independent research project with an innovative neuromodulation device that uses near infrared light to induce physiological changes in the brain. In this project he is investigating how transcranial photobiomodulation of left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex may impact sustained attention and working memory.

In addition to his academic and research pursuits, Utkarsh also works towards bridging the gap between academia and industry through his translatory work. While working as a postdoctoral research fellow at UND, Utkarsh had the opportunity to co-found a venture studio (Neurogether Ventures) to support neuroscientific innovation for which he was awarded at The Chamber's Shark Tank Grand Forks/East Grand Forks in 2024. For his efforts, he was also invited as a guest speaker at the UpNextGF event hosted by UND President Andrew Armacost. Most recently, he was awarded the Anglia Ruskin University Vice Chancellor's Highly Commended Outstanding Alumni Entrepreneur of the Year award 2025 for his translatory pursuits. Utkarsh is very grateful to be given the opportunity to work as a postdoctoral researcher in such a supportive environment in the Department of Psychology at UND. He expresses immense gratitude to his supervisors Dr. Poltavski and Dr. Petros for their constant support and guidance. He is also very thankful to all the other members of the department and appreciates their support towards his professional development.



GRASP

GRaduate Alliance for Students in Psychology (GRASP) had a very busy year, facilitating numerous on campus and off campus events to increase student involvement, fostering relationships amongst graduate students, and providing materials and resources for students in their academic journey. They hosted the annual welcome picnic for incoming graduate students, organized department potlucks, as well as assisting with the Northern Lights Psychology conference, the graduate admissions open house, and the annual Kyle Kassman research celebration.

The winner of this year's Kyle Kassman award was Kaden Bollinger, a student in the Clinical Psychology program. Kaden's research presentation was titled *The Hired Gun Effect: Can We Correct Trans Misinformation in Jurors?*

2024-25 GRASP Officers

President: Sophie Johnson
Vice President: Kaden Bollinger
Secretary: Reagan Alsbaugh
Treasurer: Emma Hickman

NORTHERN LIGHTS PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE

In addition to a record number of paper presentations and a poster session, this year's Northern Lights conference featured a keynote address by Dr. Barry Rosenfeld, a Professor of Psychology and Adjunct Professor of Law at Fordham University. Dr. Rosenfeld has published more than 200 peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, books and invited publications. His research encompasses a wide range of topics related to forensic and health psychology, including malingering, stalking and violence risk assessment, as well as treatment decision-making, desire for hastened death and refugee mental health.

Another highlight of the conference was an expert panel of researchers discussing Fake News: The Psychology of Misinformation and Pseudoscience. Panelists included Dr. Travis Clark (Department of Psychology) who explained why misinformation and pseudoscience are so powerfully persuasive from a social psychological perspective. Dr. Joao Ozawa (Department of Communication) presented recent case studies of political disinformation attacks in Brazil. Dr. Cassandra Flick (Department of Psychology) discussed strategies for mitigating the effects of misinformation on individuals' beliefs. Dr. Richard Ferraro (Department of Psychology) shared a journal Editor-in-Chief's perspective of recent disturbing trends in academic journal publishing (e.g., fake authors, reviewers and data).

NORTHERN LIGHTS 2025 PSYCHOLOGY CONFERENCE

Please mark your calendar and join us for the
2025 Northern Lights Psychology Conference
on Friday, October 24, 2025.

Dr. Alexa Tullett, a social psychology professor at University of Alabama, will be giving the keynote address.

Dr. Tullett's research focuses on how people form, hold on to, and change their beliefs particularly in the realms of politics and science. Her keynote address is ***Promoting Scientific Skepticism in a Time of Science Denial.***

2024 UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Outstanding Undergraduate Service

Emma Kilian

This award is open to psychology majors engaged in service activities during the previous academic year. Emma volunteered at Rally for Recovery events, the Women's Pregnancy Center, Lotus Therapeutic Services, the YMCA Haunted House event, Heaven Helper's Soup Café, and the Big Event. In addition to her community service, she was also active in several campus groups, including Letters of Love, the Student Psychology Association, and the Student Social Work Association. She was also active in Greek life and several honor societies serving as Vice President of the Order of Omega Honors Club, the Golden Key International Honor Society, and Psi Chi. Emma was a double major in Psychology and Criminal Justice and will continue her education at UND as a student in the Forensic Psychology M.S. program in the fall.

Outstanding Undergraduate Research

Livia Obrigewitch

This award is open to undergraduate psychology majors who serve as research assistants or conduct independent research (including an honors thesis) during the previous academic year. Recipients demonstrate outstanding research efforts, taking into consideration quantity, quality, and conceptual contributions. Livia served as a research assistant in Dr. Legerski and Dr. Hanson's lab and presented research at Red River Psychology Conference, Northern Lights Conference, and the Midwestern Psychological Association Conference held annually in Chicago.

Outstanding Psychology Student

Haley Duncan

This award is open to undergraduate psychology majors who demonstrate outstanding overall performance as an undergraduate psychology major. Haley volunteered for several campus and community opportunities, including the Big Event, the Circle of Friends Animal Shelter, the Community Violence Intervention Center, and the Green Dot event. She served as a research assistant for both Dr. Flick and Dr. Kelly, and she also published an informative paper to the UND Scholarly Commons titled, "*Endometriosis and its Effect on Women's Lives.*"

Antes Tutoring Fellowship

This tutoring fellowship is for a motivated student who can tutor other students in statistics, research methods, and writing (APA format, in particular). The awardee devotes 2-3 hours per week to working with other students. The 2024-2025 recipients was **Riley Pelowski**, who will be continuing her education at UND in the fall as a student in the Clinical Psychology program.

Walker-Kitsley Leadership Award

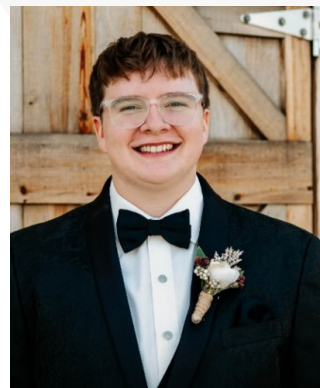
This scholarship is awarded to psychology majors with demonstrated leadership ability, broadly defined. This may include leadership in student government, student organizations, community service, teaching assistant duties, research, and/or coursework and class activities. The 2023-2024 recipients were **Grace Hawkinson and Emma Kilian**.

2024 GRADUATE STUDENT AWARDS

Terrance Family Memorial Endowment Award

Jasper Schmidtwood

As a current graduate student in the M.S. Forensic Psychology program at the University of North Dakota, my research focuses on the intersection of psychology and law. My thesis project specifically examines alibi believability in the courtroom, with the goal of identifying elements within alibi statements that jurors perceive as honest and credible. This work aims to inform and strengthen the use of alibi defenses by defendants. I was honored to receive the Cheryl Terrance Memorial Endowment Award, which has provided critical support by funding participant recruitment and contributing to the funding of future research projects in this area. This opportunity has allowed me to fully dedicate myself to my studies and contribute meaningfully to the field. I'm deeply grateful to be part of Dr. Cheryl Terrance's legacy at UND through receiving this award.



Walker Award

Awarded to a graduate student who displays outstanding overall performance in teaching, research, and service to program, department, and university. The award winner for 2024 was **Adelyn Emter**, a second-year student in the General/Experimental program.

Harold & Diana Randall Family Scholarship

This scholarship award is for graduate students in the Clinical Psychology program and intend to collaborate with a faculty member on a research project in the area of health psychology over the summer. The summer 2025 recipients include **Hadley McCartin, Olivia Revels-Stother, Meliyah Anderson-Tryon, and Rachel Miller**.

Elizabeth Abraham Award in Forensic Psychology

Awarded to outstanding graduate students based upon prior merit and proposed research. Recipients this year are **Faith Aasen and Jasper Schmidtwood**.

Elizabeth Abraham Award in General/Experimental Psychology

Awarded to support graduate G/E students who are working on publishing their research outside the 9-month academic calendar. This year's recipient is **Adelyn Emter**.

Elizabeth Abraham Award in Clinical Psychology

Awarded to a graduate student whose record to date exemplifies diligence in pursuit of the PhD, and whose proposed research best exemplifies excellence in applied clinical research and science-practice integration. This year's recipients are **Taylor Baumler and Chassidy Strege**.

UNDERGRAD PROGRAM UPDATE

The Undergraduate Psychology program at UND continues to thrive with almost 500 majors and over 200 minors, even while other programs and institutions have struggled to maintain enrollment. Approximately one fifth of our majors are distance students who can complete their entire Bachelor of Arts degree online. We're proud to offer quality online education to expand access for students who are unable to pursue an on-campus educational experience.

We also offer two undergraduate certificates—a Behavioral Health Certificate and a Forensic Psychology certificate—the latter of which is very popular and a testament to our outstanding forensic psychology faculty. We are proud to see our students regularly present research at the College of Arts and Sciences UNDERgraduate Research Showcase, as well as the Red River Psychology Conference, the Northern Lights Conference, and the Midwestern Psychological Association's annual conference.

The Student Psychology Association (SPA) was also especially productive this year. The group hosted a faculty panel in the fall about preparing for graduate school and organized a "Get Psyched for Finals" event that was open to the campus community. Members also partnered with criminal justice students to participate in the local "Kids and Cops" holiday event, a program designed to unite Grand Forks law enforcement officers and public safety employees with local disadvantaged children for a special day of shopping.



Most notably, the group hosted a campus-wide speaker event featuring Josh Rivendal, CEO and Creative Director of The i'Mpossible Project, which focuses on mental health and suicide prevention. A special thank you to the former Director of Undergraduate Programs in Psychology, Jim Antes, for his continuing support of the undergraduate program, whose generosity made this event possible.

THANK YOU!

Many of the events, research projects, conference travel opportunities, and awards highlighted in this newsletter are made possible each year by thoughtful contributions of our generous Alumni. If you would like to sponsor student research activities, conference travel, department events, including the Northern Lights conference, please consider making a donation through one of the following. Thank you!

CHERYL TERRANCE MEMORIAL ENDOWMENT Scholarships

Celebrating the legacy of long-time faculty member Dr. Cheryl Terrance.

pd.UNDalumni.org/give-terrance



RALPH KOLSTOE COLLOQUIUM SERIES Lectureships

Celebrating the legacy of professor emeritus Dr. Ralph Kolstoe.

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Supporting students, faculty, and programs.

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UND PSYCHOLOGY NEWSLETTER

Featuring news & updates from the
2024-25 academic year!

