

# PSYCHOLOGY MATTERS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE DEPARTMENT OF  
PSYCHOLOGY AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY



## OUR MISSION

The Psychology Department at Montclair State University is a community of diverse scholars and teachers who work to ensure that students in our undergraduate and graduate programs are able to use the science of psychology to understand the world and its people. We strive to help students learn the value of evidence-based practices in understanding, predicting, controlling and solving problems in a complex, diverse and information-rich world. Students develop critical thinking skills by applying theoretical conceptions of experience using scientific methods and statistical procedures to improve understanding. We further achieve our mission by demonstrating that psychological science does improve and impact humanity.

## *Dr. Jerome M. & Cindy Seidman Award*



When Professor Emeritus Jerome M. Seidman, PhD arrived at Montclair State in 1954, he had a vision for a thriving psychology department where students could develop academically and prosper professionally. Almost immediately, Seidman got to work helping to lay the foundation for one of the University's largest and most successful departments. Seidman's dedication to student excellence was unparalleled, and rivaled only by his willingness to give back to ensure every student had access to a transformative education.

Realizing the financial burden that students face, Seidman established the Jerome M. and Cindy Seidman Award to be given to two graduating psychology students who excelled in their studies at Montclair State.

Dr. Seidman's legacy lives on through his 1981 commencement speech *Introduction of The Faculty*, which is read at each year's award ceremony, and resonates still today as a testament to his knowledge, compassion and dedication to Montclair State University.

### Introduction of The Faculty

A college faculty has four basic interrelated missions: teaching and learning; focus on the arts and aesthetic values of form, harmony and beauty; research for the discovery of truth and the advancement of knowledge; public and community service.

Integrating these missions are human values and behaviors: sensitive, innovative leadership, and creative solutions for the physical and psychosocial health and well-being of people throughout the world; a strong commitment to individual human rights, social and racial justice; encouraging and rewarding cooperation, helping and responsible behavior in the pursuit of excellence.

A college faculty participates actively and critically in the changing needs of society and the peaceful resolution of conflict — and attempts to develop and strengthen moral values, spiritual values, and the capacity for compassion and forgiveness and outgoing love.

Our faculty at Montclair strives to support and improve the human condition, making life more meaningful and fulfilling. We have made a substantial contribution to the lives of our graduating students, and indirectly, our faculty has made substantial contributions to the lives of all of us.

It is my high privilege to introduce the faculty of Montclair State College.

## A FAMILY LEGACY OF TRANSFORMING EDUCATION

As we prepare to hood our first doctoral students, we reflect on the legacy and vision of Dr. Jerome M. Seidman. Focusing on the growth and foundation of the Department of Psychology was only part of the job for Dr. Seidman. Both his wife, Cindy Seidman, and he knew social mobility and student success started with access to quality and transformative education. Recognizing that the financial impact was steadily rising, the Seidmans created a merit-based yearly award for two graduating psychology students.

Today, Alan and Robert Seidman continue to honor their parents' dedication to students by both expanding the yearly award and collaborating with the Department. Together with Dr. Collins, they shared memories and congratulated the graduating students at the end of year celebration on May 4.

## 2021- 2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

- 1 OUR MISSION  
A FAMILY LEGACY OF TRANSFORMING EDUCATION
- 2 THE FIRST PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL GRADUATES
- 3 FACULTY & STUDENT SUCCESSES
- 4 PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS
- 5 STUDENT LIFE

## THE FIRST PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORAL GRADUATES (IN ORDER OF DEFENSE)

### JESSICA BONUMWEZI

is not only the first to graduate from Psychology's Clinical PhD program, but she is also the first to defend her doctoral dissertation ever for our department! After a mass-genocide took place in her home country of Rwanda 28 years ago, she decided to streamline her studies researching intergenerational trauma of families of genocide survivors. Jessica wanted a program that focused on social justice, which aligns with her values, as well as a faculty member who focused on trauma throughout the minority population and how culture affects the trauma. Finding Montclair State University was a perfect fit to help Jessica develop and disseminate interventions for the trauma victims. She even received a large grant for her dissertation study in Rwanda, approximately \$20,000!

Imposter syndrome hit Jessica hard at first! She did not speak English until 18 years old and was unsure if she could perform at the level of an "American doctoral student." She never knew anyone in her personal life with a PhD and she felt no one with her background has accomplished this. Her educational journey felt like a personal experiment at first and the tough regulations for international students did not help, but she persevered and completed her MA in Clinical Psychology with us and will be completing her doctoral degree in May 2022! Jessica has been offered a post-doctoral position with the University of Maryland where she will be working with the Global Mental Health and Addiction Program under their Department of Psychology. Her advice to other students is that "A PhD is difficult for anyone, especially students of color. Difficult any way you slice it! Being difficult does not mean you cannot do it!"

### JILL DEL POZZO

will be receiving her doctorate in Clinical Psychology with a Forensic concentration. Jill chose our program after researching faculty, mentors, and location. We are an extremely diverse and inclusive campus and program, from students to faculty, which she feels is invaluable in our field. Being a member of the first cohort definitely ranks high. Relatedly, being able to be a part of the development of the program was such a unique experience that Jill never would have received with other programs. Jill feels that the student voices were heard, and it also allowed for students and faculty to build strong relationships. She feels our faculty are amazing and do such meaningful work, it's been great working with them inside and outside of class. The greatest highlight for Jill though has been the friendships. She met some of her best friends in the program, which she will forever be grateful for!

Jill will begin a 2-year postdoctoral fellowship in Clinical Neuropsychology and Rehabilitation Research at Mount Sinai School of Medicine and the Brain Injury Research Center. She hopes to become board certified and continue to work as a Neuropsychologist at an academic medical center doing both clinical work and research.

### RENATA GARCIA PRIETO PALACIOS ROJI

is our first Industrial/Organizational Psychology PhD graduate! She is also currently completing her Certificate in Advanced Quantitative Methods in Psychology and already completed our I/O MA program. Renata had a great experience during her master's program which led her to enroll in our doctorate program! Since she did not have anyone else in her specific cohort, she had to navigate a lot of the program by herself and relied heavily on faculty. The COVID-19 pandemic shaped her interests and the unique experiences have helped everyone coping together, students and faculty. Due to her applied experiences, she strives to be a practitioner in talent management and/or learning development.

Renata would definitely recommend this program to others because the faculty are great, classes are small so you get to know your peers better, and there is a great collaborative culture between students and faculty. "This experience is truly what you make of it!" Some advice for future students: develop very good time management skills, set short term goals with long term goals in mind, keep up with everything and think ahead.

"My time here has been a great experience and I hope others get to make their own great experiences! It's awesome to be the first, and a female!!!"

### DEVANTÉ (DJ) CUNNINGHAM

will also make history being amongst the very first Psychology doctoral candidates to be hooded this month! This Virginia native packed his bags and moved to the unfamiliar territory of northern New Jersey just a few years ago to pursue his MA and PhD in Clinical Psychology with us! Unfortunately, DJ's sister passed away in 2020 at the young age of 15 and although you can never truly overcome the challenges that come with that, DJ used her loss as motivation to be the best clinical psychologist he can be. Throughout his time here, DJ assisted in the development of the logo and name for the EPIC lab, collaboratively developed studies that have been published in scholarly journals, and even traveled to another country to present his research findings.

Upon graduation, DJ will be at Columbia University Irving Medical Center in the Clinical Psychology Postdoctoral Fellowship in Adult Mood, Anxiety and Personality Disorders. He wishes to further specialize clinically in treating individuals with a history of trauma and suicidal ideations, and to develop programs that train mentors to effectively work with children of color. DJ suggests that all students advocate for themselves and their needs, and be patient because sometimes the seed you plant will not blossom until you've graduated. "If you want more publications, ask! If you have a skill that you want honed, ask! If you need help in any way, ask! Reach out if you need help or support."

## FACULTY & STUDENT SUCCESSES

### AWARDS, GRANTS, & SCHOLARSHIPS

Gabriela Amaya, Malina K. Dundua, Ruth Grace S. Lopez, Erika M. Ortiz, and Melanie G. Peralta have been selected for the 2022 Nancy Walsh Scholarship Fund.

Josari B. Cabral Alcantara and Malia E. Colombo have been selected for the 2022 Nancy Draper Fund.

Rebeca Costa do Nascimento, Mary DePietro, Karima Elgamal, Gregory Hartle, Britney Jeyanayagam, Emily Lynch, Haley Nauman, Christopher Simmen, Lydia Wei, and Samantha Zakrzewski have been selected for the 2022 Orpha M. Lutz Scholarship.

Dr. Milton A. Fuentes has been selected for the 2021 New Jersey Psychological Association Academic & Scientific Affairs' Distinguished Faculty Award and recently gave a keynote speech at the 89th New Jersey Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Meeting.

Nicole E. Guardado and Christian Roman have been selected for the 2022 Dr. Jerome and Cindy Seidman Award.

Dr. Sally Grapin has been selected for the Dean's Recognition Award for Research for 2021-2022.

Dr. Erin Kang won the 2022 Slifka/Ritvo Innovation in Autism Research Award from the International Society for Autism Research and the Alan B. Slifka Foundation. This award honors the most meritorious and innovative research ideas of junior investigators on autism spectrum disorder that will lead to novel treatments and improvements in the quality of life of individuals with autism, as well as novel discoveries regarding the basic science of autism.

Sadaf Khawar, a PhD Candidate in Clinical Psychology, mentored by Dr. Erin Kang, was awarded the SCCAP Diversity Professional Development Award from the Society of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology. This award is intended to support professional development opportunities of graduate students and early career professionals from diverse backgrounds.

Dr. Laura Lakusta and Dr. Jennifer Bragger, Co-Directors of the Servant Leadership Research lab, are the recipients of a three-year, \$474,000 National Science Foundation grant to study the cognitive and developmental antecedents of servant leadership.

#### Highlights from 2020

Dr. Deborah Fish Ragin, professor emerita, established the John A. and Juanita M. Fish Red Hawks Fellows Endowed Fund. Red Hawk Fellows are students who are identified as emancipated foster students, unaccompanied homeless students, and those students from households where no immediate parental or extended family guidance is accessible.

Dr. Joshua Sandry was awarded grants from the NJ Department of Health: NJ Commission on Brain Injury Research and the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. Dr. Sandry's Cognition & Neurocognitive Disorders Research Lab received \$1.3 million in external funding.

### NEWS

#### New Advanced Certificate

Dr. Michael Bixter developed the Advanced Quantitative Methods in Psychology Certificate. "[It] was designed to give graduate students at Montclair State University advanced training in data analytic methods that are in high demand in the contemporary job market. We are pleased to announce that the certificate program has already exceeded projected enrollment numbers after just two semesters."

#### STEM Designation

This year, all Psychology MA and PhD programs have received STEM designation. Students who are part of the BA/MA also benefit from this designation.

### DOCTORAL PROGRAMS

Interview with doctoral directors Dr. Jeremy Fox (Clinical) and Dr. Dan Simonet (I/O)

#### **When did this program launch?**

Clinical: Fall 2017 (9 students)

I/O: Fall 2020 (5 students)

#### **What paths do graduates follow?**

Clinical: Students are prepared for positions in both research-oriented & practice-oriented settings.

I/O: Human capital consulting, people analytics, & senior level leadership roles in behavioral management of firms

#### **What are some of the research areas?**

Clinical: Child/adolescent anxiety & depression, autism spectrum disorder & developmental disabilities, disordered eating behaviors, increasing access to mental health services for racial/ethnic minority youth, adolescent decision-making in plea bargaining, forensic mental health assessment, neuropsychology, and social justice & multicultural issues in professional psychology.

I/O: Personnel selection, training, leadership development, group decision making, cyberloafing, and employee engagement

#### **What hopes do you have for this program?**

Clinical: To continue to expand our specialty areas in clinical child psychology, forensic psychology, & neuropsychology with additional faculty members, elective courses, & other opportunities for our students

I/O: To be a nationally ranked program in terms of research output, student achievements, and regular SIOP presentations

#### **What kind of students would you like to see in this program?**

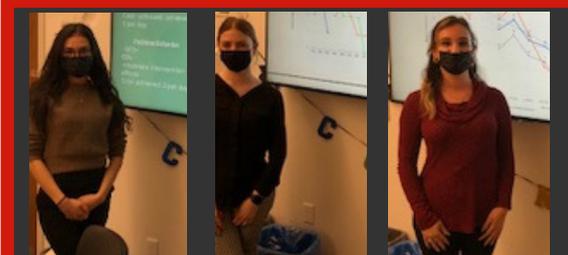
Clinical: Those dedicated to becoming scientist-practitioners who engage in evidence-based practice & conduct research that addresses real-world clinical problems & promotes improvements in psychological well-being.

I/O: Those dedicated to a scientist-practitioner mindset with a passion for evidence, statistics, & critical reasoning around solutions to organizational problems.

## PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

### Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Annual Conference

The 2022 SIOP Annual Conference (April 27th - 30th), held in Seattle, WA, showcased talented Montclair State University faculty and students who presented research on personality, leadership, inclusivity, performance, and more: Dr. Jessica Bragger, Alexis Coulter, Diego Figueiras, Renata Garcia Prieto Palacios Roji, Melissa Gutworth, Dr. John Kulas, Dr. Laura Lakusta, Ian Lee, Morgan Russell, Dr. Valerie Sessa, Dr. Dan Simonet, Dana Sobel, Pasquale Tosto, Nikita Williams, and Christy Vrushi. Even more Montclair State I/O graduate students attended the conference, as they supported their classmates, expanded their knowledge, and learned from industry leaders. A 2018 study by SIOP ranked Montclair as one of the top I/O programs in the country.



### The School Psychology Program 4th Annual Extern Intervention Symposium

On May 9, Cohort 2022 presented at the Center for Clinical Services on campus. Following the grand-rounds presentation style, the interns discussed their case studies, all of which featured school-based behavioral and academic intervention treatment plans, data collection and analysis for youth in NJ and PA public schools. The case presentations were observed by fellow classmates and program faculty, who rated them based on a standard rubric. This year's symposium demonstrated that school psychology externs are qualified to create meaningful and targeted interventions that have a positive impact on student learning, despite the pandemic struggles they experienced.

### First Annual Neuroscience Conference at Montclair State University

Over 150 students attended on April 20 where Dr. Diana Reiss (Hunter College) was guest speaker. Organized primarily by students from Active Minds, Friends of Doctors without Borders, Neuroscience Club, and Psychology Club (with support from Dr. Julian Keenan from Biology and the College of Science and Mathematics), the conference showed the accomplishments of the students. It also demonstrated the need for undergraduate and graduate neuroscience programs at Montclair State. Dr. Keenan will direct the minor (pending approval) and he remarked, "With active labs such as Dr. Ruth Propper's (Psychology), Dr. Ilse Wambacq's (Communication Sciences and Disorders), [my lab], and more, our students have amazing opportunities."



## PRESENTATIONS & PUBLICATIONS

Graduate assistants Tristin Faust and Ryan Schneider, and Dr. Tarika Daftary-Kapur (Justice Studies) and Dr. Tina Zottoli (Psychology) whose research is on juvenile lifers, will be published in the journal Psychology, Public Policy, and Law.

Shannon Schierenbeck and Dr. Ruth Propper, whose research on unilateral hand clutching has been accepted into the journal of Psychological Applications and Trends, will also be presenting their work at the 2022 InPACT Conference

Melissa Villafana and Dr. Ruth Propper, whose research titled: "Frequency of Multiple Sclerosis as a Function of Handedness" has been presented at MSU's first Neuroscience Conference (April 2022), with publication in progress.

Bragger, J.D., Alonso, N., Templeman, A., Tosto, P., Coulter, A., Steinhour, B., Williams, N. Sobel, D. Lakusta, L. (in press). A Servant Leader-Oriented Assessment, Challenge, Support Model of Leadership Development. In The Palgrave Handbook of Servant Leadership. Eds. Satinder Dhiman and Gary Roberts.

Notari, C. Toich, M. Sessa, V. Bragger, J. (2022). You can go your own way. ACPA Developments. Volume 19 (2).

Lauren Grove, an advanced student in the psychology department's PhD program in clinical psychology, recently had an article for which she served as first author, Technology for assessment and treatment of justice-involved youth: A systematic literature review, published in Law and Human Behavior, the official journal of Division 41 (American Psychology-Law Society) of the American Psychological Association.

Alonso, N, Bragger, J., Templeman, A.,\* Tosto, P., Coulter, A.,\* Steinhour, B., Williams, N. \*Sobel, D. \*Lakusta, L Establishing Effective Leadership Development: Developing Leaders by Focusing on Followers. Presented at the 19th Conference for Eastern Academy of Management International.

\*Sobel, D. & Bragger, J.B. A Systematic Review of Servant Leadership Outcome Categories. (2022, April). The Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Seattle, Washington.

Williams, N., Coulter, A., Tosto, P., Sobel, D., Habib, J., Norton, R., Bracken, A., Vrushi, C., Quevedo, Y., Bragger, J., & Lakusta, L. (2022, April 29). Using the Match-to-Sample Technique to Assess Understanding of Leadership [Poster Presentation]. The Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Seattle, Washington.

Notari, C. M., Sessa, V. I., Bragger, J., Yang, L., & Sobel, D. (2021, October 20-25). Leadership Principles Inventory: Developing an Instrument for Evaluating College Students' Beliefs about the Nature of Leadership [Paper presentation]. ILA 2022, Geneva, Switzerland.

Williams, N., Sobel, D., Bragger, D., Lakusta, L., Bracken, A., Tosto, P., Vrushi, C., Yang, L., Rodwell, D., & Patel, N. (2021, October 25). Identifying leadership using Match-to-Sample: An alternative to self-report in leadership [Paper presentation]. International Leadership Association 2021, Geneva, Switzerland.

## STUDENT LIFE

### PEER LEARNING, COACHING, & STUDENT SUPPORT

Inspired by the Seidman family's dedication to our students, Dr. Yoav Arieih, Dr. Saundra Collins, Dr. Milton Fuentes and Melissa Vélez developed the new Psychology Peer Learning Program. It was featured in a grant by Montclair State's Center for Community Engagement for the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation. This awarded grant provides stipends for the following undergraduate peer mentors: Princess Cortes, Marshawn McShan, Maria Tsakonas, and Celine Williams.

Supporting our psychology majors and minors, the peer mentors teamed with the following student success coaching staff: Rebeca Costa do Nascimento; Caroline Gutierrez; Janeth Marquez-Pacheco, MBA; and Daniela Masdonati, MA. In addition to the mentors and coaching staff, the following students excelled in providing departmental administrative support and promoting advising services: Alyssa Harris, Fatima Peguero, and Isabel Skovera.

### ENGAGE WITH MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS

- [Active Minds](#)
- [Multicultural Psychology Scholars](#)
- [Neuroscience Club](#)
- [Psi Chi \(Honor Society\)](#)
- [Psychology Club](#)



### PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Click the underlined text to learn more!

- [American Arab, Middle Eastern, and North African Psychological Association](#)
- [American Indian and Alaska Native Society of Indian Psychologists](#)
- [APA: Committee on Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity](#)
- [APA Division 18: Psychologists in Public Service and their YouTube Channel](#)
- [APA: Graduate Students](#)
- [APA: Society for the Psychological Study of Culture, Ethnicity, and Race](#)
- [APA Student Network](#)
- [Asian American Psychological Association](#)
- [Association of Black Psychologists](#)
- [The BIPOC Project's Psychology Authors Resource List](#)
- [National Latinx Psychological Association](#)
- [Society for Community Research & Action](#)
- [Society for the Teaching of Psychology](#)

### DEAR PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT COMMUNITY

We thank you for being here this year and contributing to our community.

May the resources in this newsletter help you on your journey, may the research spark your curiosity, and may the stories inspire you to keep soaring.

Enjoy a safe and fun summer.

We look forward to your return in the fall.

Sincerely,  
The Department of Psychology at Montclair State University



### ADVISING CORNER

Click the underlined text for more information!

- [CHSS Advising Team Live Chat & Videos](#)
- [Psychology Advising Team FAQs](#)
- [Undergraduate Psychology Courses](#)

### ALIGNED PROGRAMS & SERVICES

- Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) provides the [TAO app free of charge](#) and offers a variety of services from individual to support groups. We encourage you to contact CAPS if you (or someone you know) would like [support with coping and healing](#).
- [Center for Writing Excellence](#)
- [FOCUS 2 Career Tool](#), a self-paced, online career and education planning tool in [Career Services](#), is designed to help you make decisions about career goals and education plans.

### STUDY BREAK!

- Check out Dr. Milton Fuentes on the podcast, *Psych Sessions!* [Listen to the episode: How can I use my syllabus in a way to improve Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion?](#)
- [Watch the APA video: The World Needs Psychology](#)

### 2021 - 2022 NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

- Isabel Skovera
- Melissa Vélez
- Jen Wilenta, MA