Dear Educational Psychology family,

After what felt like one of our longest winters ever, spring is finally here! As it is with nature, for Ed Psych it also is a time of growth and change: faculty and staff coming and going, students completing and starting, and changes in leadership as well.

This letter is the last one I will have the privilege of writing to you as chair of the Department of Educational Psychology. The past six years (two terms) has been a time of continuous change—with a number of long-time faculty retiring and a few leaving for other opportunities—with increased hiring of full time instructors and contract faculty to cover our course needs, and of course, with almost total turnover of our graduate students.

I'll be passing the torch to Professor Kristen McMaster in July. Kristen will be an
outstanding chair. She started as a lecturer in the Department in 2002. Her outstanding research and teaching have resulted in her building an outstanding career and moving through the ranks to full professor in 2015. Kristen has served in a number of leadership roles during her tenure here, including program coordinator of our special education area for many years. I am very pleased that she’s accepted the leadership role, knowing that we are in very capable hands. Please join me in welcoming Kristen McMaster as chair of the Department of Educational Psychology!

Over the last year, we’ve been preparing for our external review which took place in April. Two external reviewers from other Big Ten universities (Patricia Alexander, Maryland, and James DiPerna, Penn State) plus Michael Oakes, a professor in Public Health and Associate Vice President for Research here at Minnesota, met with faculty in our department. They were very complimentary about the talented faculty and students here, but also had a number of suggestions that they believe will position Ed Psych even better for the future. They will share an analysis of their visit and the materials we provided them with in a written report very soon. This report will give us fresh perspectives to use as we develop an action plan for the continued success of the Ed Psych for years to come.

The graduate school rankings from U.S. News & World Report were recently released. Once again, our department received top rankings among programs nationwide. Educational Psychology was #10, special education was #9, and our counseling and student personnel psychology program was ranked #14 this year.

On March 1, we hosted the 18th Annual Educational Psychology Graduate Student Research Day (GSRD) which celebrates the outstanding accomplishments of our students by providing a format for graduate students to present their research and be recognized by peers and faculty. This year, three students presented their papers and 22 presented posters (and size was limited because GSRD conflicted with the National Association of School Psychologists’ meeting). We continue to be impressed by the excellence and innovation of our students’ research.

In December, we bid a fond farewell to long-time administrative director, Sande Hill after 39 years of service at the U—many of which were here in Educational Psychology. She has provided stable leadership through a number of chair changes, and has been counted on both to keep us on track and to provide strong leadership for the department professional staff that support all the things that we do. Sande brought a passion for her work and the people of this department that you couldn’t help but feel. No doubt, her years of hard work have directly contributed to our continued success.

At the end of the school year, we’ll say goodbye and thank you to Tom Skovholt, Amy Kunkel, Robin Codding, and Christal Vang. Tom Skovholt, a professor in our counseling and student personnel psychology program, will retire after 42 years at the University. Tom has written numerous books on his research in: resiliency development and burnout prevention for counselors, clinical supervision, mastery of expertise in the helping professions, and the counseling process and helping skills. In addition—as we prepare for his retirement party—it is clear that he has made a profound personal impact on his past students, colleagues, friends, and family members, for there have been over 100 RSVPs. Many have written with kind words and wishes for Tom.
Amy Kunkel has been a valued contributor to our department for a number of years. She started as a PhD student and went on to be hired as a lecturer, helping to run our undergraduate program as an instructor and advisor and teaching courses in our academic behavioral strategist (ABS) licensure program. Amy is originally from the south and will be moving to Atlanta this summer with her family. She leaves a big hole in our undergraduate program.

Robin Codding has made the difficult decision to move to be closer to family and the support that they can provide. She has accepted a position at Northeastern University in Boston. Robin has played an integral part in our school psychology program since joining us in 2015. We will miss her research expertise focused on school-based interventions, and specifically data-based decision making in the area of mathematics.

Christal Vang has served as our human resources and payroll business liaison since 2013. Although we are really sad to lose her, our loss is our college’s gain, for she will not be moving far. She has accepted a well-deserved promotion to work at the college level in CEHD.

I know we all have shared our appreciation for the good work of Sande, Tom, Amy, Robin, and Christal. We wish them all the best in their future endeavors!

With Sande’s departure, we welcomed a new administrative director in February. Pat Schommer comes to us from a similar role in the Medical School. She brings her self-described “unbridled enthusiasm, exuberant passion, tenacious organization, laughter always and obsessiveness” to the role, and we are excited to see where she takes our department operations next.

Daniel Pfaff also joined our department this spring as an instructor in our American Sign Language (ASL) program. Daniel has his BA in theater arts from Gallaudet University and received his master’s in ASL education from the University of Northern Colorado. When you get the chance, please join me in welcoming Pat and Daniel to the department!

In the fall, we will add three new faculty. Savana Bak will join us as an assistant professor in our special education program. Savana earned her PhD in special education from Michigan State University. Her research focuses on understanding the language environments of young people with autism spectrum disorder. Seungwon Chung will join us as an assistant professor in quantitative methods. She comes with a PhD in research methods and an MA in statistics from UCLA. Her research interests include latent variable modeling, item response theory, and generalized linear mixed modeling. David DeLiema also will start as an assistant professor in our psychological foundations of education program this fall. David comes to us from the University of California – Berkeley, with a PhD from UCLA. His research is in the area of learning sciences, with a focus of understanding and “Debugging” failures, and how we can use those to increase our problem solving abilities. We look forward to the fresh perspectives and expertise Savana, Seungwon, and David will bring to the department.

Thank you to all of our alumni and friends for your many ways of staying connected.
and supporting the department and the field of educational psychology. We have a department we all should be proud of, for our people are leading scholars, excellent teachers, and strongly engaged with community partners. Your success and support of our work is the reason we are highly rated; it helps us continue to make an impact in our communities in Minnesota and across the globe. I hope I have left the department at least as strong as I found it when I started as chair. It has been a great opportunity.

Last but definitely not least, 83 of our graduate students were recognized in the College of Education and Human Development’s graduate commencement ceremony last week, and a total of 26 special education undergraduates received degrees this year.

Congratulations and welcome to all of our new alumni!

Sincerely,
Geoffrey Maruyama
Department Chair

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Alumni in the news

We love hearing from our alumni! Send us a note to tell us what you have been doing (epcomm@umn.edu).

- Wolff, colleagues aim to detect autism earlier with two new NIH grants
- Alumna awarded CEC Outstanding School Psychologist 2018-19
- Kruse, PhD ’07, authors book on youth social entrepreneurship
- In memoriam: Ida-Lorraine Wilderson, PhD ’72
- Special ed PhD alum receives award for dissertation
- Sullivan, alumni research informs new NASP position statement
- Zief fler wins MPA's Outstanding Faculty in Psychology Award
- Wolff awarded McKnight Presidential Fellowship
- Sullivan, alum publish study on minority disproportionality in special ed
- Sullivan, current and past school psych students publish study in Remedial and Special Education
- Johnson talks with KSTP News about early ADHD diagnoses
- Wolff quoted in Spectrum on sensory responsiveness in toddlers
- Sandra Christenson receives CEHD Distinguished Alumni Award

More alumni news

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A world of learning, one to one
It was through a chance encounter in 1968 that now cross-cultural counseling leader Kay Thomas, '85, heard about a temporary job opening at the campus international student adviser’s office. Energetic and outgoing, she got the job and worked with student exchange programs and orientation for incoming international students and scholars. At the end of the year, the office kept her on. Read more.

More alumni profiles

Department news and announcements

- Rodriguez delivers 2019 CEHD grad commencement keynote
- McMaster awarded Stern Family Professorship
- Ed Psych students awarded Doctoral Dissertation Fellowships
- On the road: Rodriguez brings assessment training to Minnesota schools
- The Early Writing Project makes implementation easier for teachers
- Rodriguez delivers 2019 CEHD grad commencement keynote
- CSPP student named MSCA Potential School Counselor of the Year
- Rodriguez appointed to Minneapolis Foundation Board of Trustees
- Butterfuss receives Richard C. Anderson Graduate Student Research Award from NCIC
- Kim receives NSF Graduate Research Fellowship
- Renaissance acquires Early Learning Labs, educational technology product developed by CEHD
- Psych foundations PhD candidate attends CASE Workshop in D.C.
- Rodriguez appointed to NCME board of directors
- Sullivan participates in Stanford U symposium on learning differences
- Miller receives runner up for Article of the Year in Journal of School Psychology
- Cook awarded Article of the Year by School Psychology Review
- CSPP students, faculty participate in Minnesota School Counselor Association Day on the Hill
- Ed Psych presents 28 times at AERA and NCME
- Ed Psych grad programs among top in nation
- Thayer, school psych PhD student, awarded Burris Fellowship
- Butterfuss, psych foundations PhD student, awarded CEHD Hauge Fellowship
- Ed Psych students present research at GSRD
- School psych faculty present at MSPA on myth busting in the field
- School psych PhD student publishes research in School Mental Health
- School psych PhD student publishes in Psychology in the Schools
- Psych foundations PhD candidate begins training with U.S. GAO
- Ed Psych PhD student named Emerging Scholar by BWG

More Ed Psych news

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