



# CSUN Psychology Department Newsletter

November &  
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## Message from the Chair

I know that you are all working a little harder as we reach the end of the semester and I wish you the best in meeting your end-of-the-semester goals!

As we approach the end of another year and we head into the holidays, I want to let you know how honored I am to lead this wonderfully diverse department and group of people. The unique world views, perspectives and lived experiences that we offer one another is invaluable, and I believe that we are all so much better for it. So, as we close this year, I celebrate us and our department!



I would also like to express my warm appreciation to everyone who works so hard in our department. I am very appreciative to our staff, faculty and students who make our department strong and successful. A special thank you to our hardworking staff, **Mirna Reyes, Evelyn Osorio, Judi Friedman, Martin Castro, Alex Montes, Ashley Rice** and all of our dedicated student office assistants! Additionally, we are extremely lucky to have three amazing academic advisors, **Kevin Zemlicka, Robert Park, and Julia Alves** (our newest psychology advisor) who are dedicated to the success of our students.

As we set off for the holidays, I wish you a restful holiday season and a break filled with many happy moments with your family and friends! Looking forward to seeing you back next year refreshed and reinvigorated.

Happy holidays and a Happy New Year!

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# Cognitive Journeys in Justice with Dr. Elise Fenn

Written by: Natalie Welles  
Edited by: Adrienne Cuevas

Dr. Elise Fenn has focused her research on several significant and socially impactful topics. Her research has spanned across concepts such as the role of social identity in social and cognitive processes to applied cognitive psychology concerning memory recollection and its accuracy. She combines legal and cognitive psychology to investigate ways to improve the U.S. legal system particularly in regards to initial law enforcement interactions and humane suspect interviews. Before delving into her research further, let's take a step back and explore Dr. Fenn's educational journey—how did she immerse herself into the world of legal and cognitive psychology?

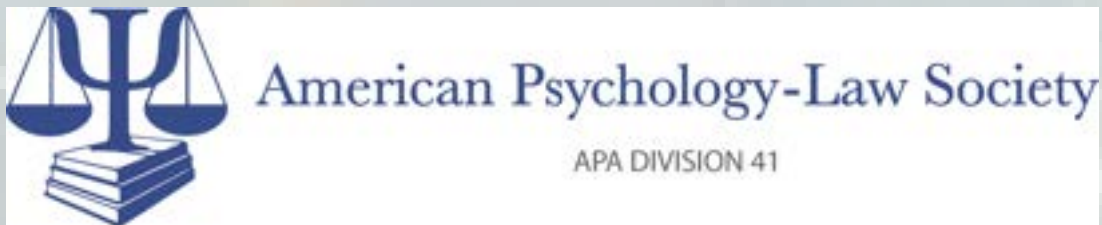


Dr. Fenn's academic roots start at Fullerton College. After attending Fullerton College, she transferred to California State University, Fullerton where she received her Bachelor's in Psychology. During her time as an undergraduate student, she became a research assistant who studied lie detection tests. Fascinated by this work, she delved deeper into the world of legal psychology as it pertains to cognitive psychology. She went on to receive both her Master's and Doctorate in Applied Cognitive Psychology at Claremont Graduate University. Dr. Fenn continues to contribute to academia now as an Associate Professor at CSUN, Principal Investigator of the Applied Cognition in Psychology (ACP) Lab, and Faculty Advisor of the Community and Achievement in Psychological Sciences (CAPS) organization.

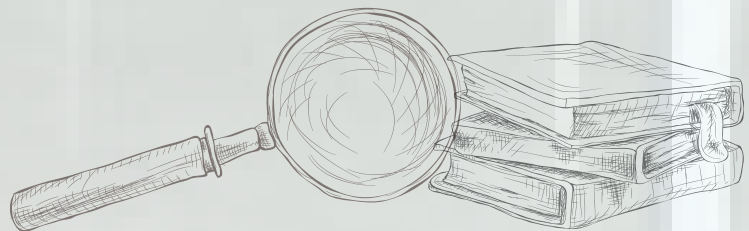
Currently, Dr. Fenn runs three projects within the ACP Lab. These projects focus on 1) understanding the dissemination of misinformation about mass shooting incidents, 2) utilizing theories of memory and decision-making to truth judgments and communication, and 3) exploring the influence of cognitive processes on race and law enforcement interactions within the broader legal system. While Dr. Fenn primarily uses quantitative analysis, she does not shy away from occasionally marrying qualitative methodologies into her work. By doing so, she constructs a comprehensive understanding of human behavior in her work. If you find that this work resonates with you, Dr. Fenn currently has research

assistant (RA) positions open for her project concerning mass shootings and misinformation. The ACP Lab is looking for someone with an interest in cognitive and social psychology who works well in teams. Additionally, potential RAs should be able to devote five to ten hours per week to lab work—with some flexibility—for at least a year before they graduate. Dr. Fenn's commitment to legal and applied cognitive psychology extends beyond research.

Aside from building empirical research skills, she emphasizes the importance of fostering meaningful connections within the realm of academia. As a result, she welcomes potential RAs with no research experience and she values gaining hands-on experience within her lab. Not only does her approach nurture interests, but it also cultivates vital skills that can empower students to grow as researchers and contribute in a meaningful manner to the world of applied cognitive psychology and legal psychology. With that being said, Dr. Fenn's ACP Lab offers an amazing opportunity for you to get involved – especially if you're new to the world of research. So, don't hesitate to reach out to her.



Dr. Fenn's advice for those interested in these topics is to get to know someone in the field. She is going to be attending this year's APA division 41, AP-LS conference - which is being held in Los Angeles at the Westin Bonaventure Hotel from Mar. 21 to 23. Last year, her lab presented twice at an APA division 41, American Psychology-Law Society (AP-LS) conference. She has offered to show students around should they plan on attending - so reach out to her, or come say hi! Seize this chance to not only connect with Dr. Fenn—but also to gain firsthand insights into ongoing research within legal psychology. Attendees of this year's conference can explore potential collaborations, discover avenues for further study, and create connections outside the conference. This opportunity can enhance your understanding of legal psychology and serve as a catalyst for embarking on a journey that could potentially shape your future. Dr. Fenn's continuous commitment to the academic and personal development of her students reflects not only her dedication to the field but also her genuine passion for cultivating the next generation of scholars in psychology.





# Breaking Down Barriers and Building Bridges with Dr. Jonathan Martinez

Written by: Natalie Welles  
Edited by: Adrienne Cuevas



CSUN Psychology professor Dr. Jonathan Martinez conducts clinical psychology research with a focus on cultural relevance, addressing significant cultural challenges that lead to racial/ethnic disparities within mental health care for families. With a keen focus on examining these disparities, investigating sociocultural factors and developing culturally responsive strategies, Dr. Martinez aims to enhance community engagement and establish pathways for connecting families of color, primarily the Latinx community with mental health services. Dr.

Martinez began his academic career as an engineering major but switched over to psychology while he was an undergraduate student at the University of California, Irvine. During his time as an undergraduate research assistant, he noticed a lack of families of color participating in the research and that those who did seek out services often came to one session but never came back. He recognized that there existed a significant portion of these communities who had never been given the resources necessary to seek out mental health support. This pattern motivated Dr. Martinez to address these disparities. His research interests continued during his time as a graduate student at California State University, San Diego as well as University of California, Los Angeles, where he earned his Master's degree in both Psychology and Clinical Psychology, respectively. Dr. Martinez went on to earn his Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology at the University of California, Los Angeles.

Dr. Martinez runs the P.U.E.N.T.E. Lab, located in Sierra Hall 383. Currently, Dr. Martinez is working on a Mental Health Psychoeducational Toolkit for Latinx Families within his lab. The toolkit itself is collaboratively being built with providers as well as the communities it intends to serve. The toolkit gives providers a foundation of psychoeducation as a concept, its importance, and ways it can be delivered effectively. Embracing the power of multimedia, the toolkit utilizes digital and video copies in addition to hard copies. Right now, the lab has a podcast in the works that features different guests, ranging from providers, teachers, and student-athletes, to clients—all sharing their personal experiences regarding mental health.



The P.U.E.N.T.E. Lab has also partnered with 10 separate counties throughout Southern California, but their most active partnership is through Santa Barbara's Department of Behavioral Wellness. The P.U.E.N.T.E. Lab uses the (r16) Support for Research Excellence grant (SuRE) from the National Institute of General Medicine Services (NIH). Using evidence-based engagement strategies and assessing cultural responsiveness, Dr. Martinez fosters a collaborative environment within his workshops. As an undergrad, Dr. Martinez recognized the significance that Promotoras had in the community. Promotoras are individuals often within the community they serve, who are trained to provide and promote basic health/mental health education and engage in outreach and support to members of their community. The vital role that Promotoras play when it comes to bridging the gap between providers and marginalized communities resonated with Dr. Martinez and led to him integrating a community-based participatory and an implementation-science model within his research. This approach integrates mixed-method work, using quantitative data and assessment from focus groups and surveys, to find out participants' satisfaction with the work being done with implementation outcomes. .

If you're keen on delving into mental health and community outreach, consider these valuable insights Dr. Martinez shared: these community partnerships take quite some time to form. They are built on trust and collaboration. It's important to acknowledge that although the goals are to collect data and ask questions, it's essential to consider the needs of the community that the research is focused on. He emphasizes the importance of co-developing these research focuses to support its future implementation, fostering genuine collaboration and impactful outcomes within the communities that it intends to serve.





# Who's Got Talent?

Written by: Armando Martinez

Edited by: Adrianne Cuevas

## WE Got Talent!

Is there a better way to send off October than a show full of skills and thrills? The 13th annual Psychology's Got Talent Show took place on October 26, 2023 at the USU Grand Salon. It was an astonishing success with plenty of notable moments that absolutely thrilled and delighted the audience. This event was not only a method to showcase our department's talents or to support friends, but it also served as a way to remember that we all have aspects of ourselves to be proud of outside of grades and GPA. From the tear jerkers to power ballads, the audience fell in love with what seemed like a normal show. Unbeknownst to most, there would soon be a surprise visit from the undead...



Welcome Wait, zombies...in our talent show!? To their dismay, audience members were haunted by zombies lurking in the dark. Michael Jackson's signature song "Thriller" blared through the speakers as zombie dancers descended upon the crowd and began their mesmerizing crawl towards the stage. Instead of stealing our brains, they stole our hearts and cheers. They blew us away once with their King of Pop level moves. When we unmask the zombies, we find a hoard of undergrads and grad students alike. They are as follows: Katrina Hill, Armando Martinez, Lauren Khoury, Seth Almaraz, Rina Tomita, Alexandria Christoforatos, Estephanie Lopez, and Mariah Elledge. This undead pack was led by instructor and host of the show, Olga Kramarova. She and the students coordinated this death-defying performance in the span of only two days! The zombies weren't the only ones to surprise the crowd that night. The living performers had plenty of tricks up their sleeves as well.

Encore! Encore! This year's performers did not disappoint as they finally revealed their hidden talents for everyone to see. As the first act began, we heard the beautiful vocals from Charli Givings, Tataneisha Wells, Seth Almaraz, and Adrianne Cuevas. In each of their acts, their singing kept us entranced while they poured their hearts onto the stage. Poetry from Melissa Herrera kept us wanting to hear more as tears swept our cheeks. Meanwhile, Professor Kramarova was offstage doing a costume change in preparation for a beautiful and traditional Ukrainian folk dance that reminds us how the beauty of art connects us all even amidst political turmoil.

This event was not only to highlight the Psychology Department and their beautiful talents, but also to raise money in order to fund student success. During intermission, Dr. Ainsworth revealed the ongoing fundraiser happening during the talent show. This fundraiser was done by implementing a silent auction where anyone can bid on a “item” of sorts. These items ranged from physical crafts like handmade blankets and colorful earrings, to attending a class in order to learn and appreciate crochet. Due to professor and student dedication, these items and more were donated to help raise funds in order to aid in student’s academic achievements. All proceeds from this auction went towards the Creative Endeavors Scholarship that aims to support psychology students with their unique insight within research and activities by funding and rewarding their creativity.

That’s not all folks! Dr. Ainsworth kicked off Act Two with a bit of spoken word poetry. He was then joined on stage by Olga Kramarova, Dr. Stefanie Drew, and Dr. Mark Otten who competed in a Family Feud style game show on who knew their students the best. Grad student Phoebe Shorter’s soulful voice filled the auditorium with 70s tunes and Alana Nagys tearful guitar with a performance of a song she wrote herself. Finally, the stage was set for Dr. Ainsworth’s closing performance with Scott Appelrouth, Michael Gonzales and Alan Person who gave us a finale we will never forget. This show was a personal passion of Dr. Andrew Ainsworth and Olga Kramarova who are both performers in their own right that also believe in the importance of creative expression. Thanks to their hard work, yet another successful talent show has transpired and they show no signs of stopping any time soon. Special thanks to the Psychology Department, Dr. Jill Razani, and Judi Friedman for making this talent show a reality.





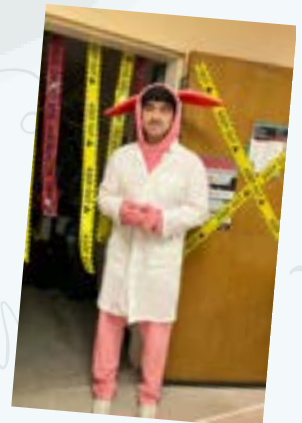
# Candies and Pizza and Research, Oh My! CAPS Lab Trick or Treat

Missed the feeling of trick or treating? We did too. This Halloween, the Community of Achievement in Psychological Sciences (CAPS) and Psychology department research labs celebrated in style. Located on the third floor of the Sierra Hall, students were able to swipe some free candy, free pizza, and free advice from some of the wonderful labs all while looking killer in their costumes. This year, CAPS was happy to host the following labs: Dr. Adrian Valadez's Queer and Trans Psychological Inclusion y Equidad (QTPIE) Lab, Dr. Chunying Jin's Behavioral Health Lab, Dr. Stefanie Drew's Visual Information Science and Neuroscience (VISN) Lab, Dr. Jill Razani's Neuropsychology Dementia and Multicultural Lab, Dr. Omar Ruvalcaba's Technology and Education in Cultural Context (TECC) Lab, Dr. Jonathan Martinez's P.U.E.N.T.E. Research Lab, and Dr. Abraham Rutchick's SPADE Lab.

Amidst the trick or treating, students were able to learn about some of the current research projects being done through our department and inquire about signing up. If you're interested in joining a lab, the best way to inquire is to check out their websites or send an email to the professor in charge. The labs went all out this year turning their professional spaces into pop-up haunted mansions.

All of the labs did a spooktacular job, but only 3 could take the crown in the annual lab Trick or Treat competition. Students voted on Most Festive Lab, Spookiest Lab, and Most Creative Lab. With her vivid piñata costume and lively personality, Dr. Valadez's QTPIE Lab won as Most Festive Lab. Dr. Drew's VISN Lab returned with their classic, bone-chilling maze that swept us away as Spookiest Lab. Finally Dr. Ruvalcaba's TECC Lab took us back to our childhood with their vintage Halloween and full-size candy bars and won as Most Creative Lab. Needless to say, the event was fun, informative, and showcased the psychology department's camaraderie.

Not able to make it this year? Don't worry, the event is annual! Thank you to the wonderful people at CAPS and the research assistants who set up this event. We hope to see you trick or treating next year!





## Semester with CAPS

CAPS really emphasized the Community part of Community for Achievement in Psychological Sciences this Fall Semester. Starting strong, CAPS added a new faculty advisor and three new managers to the team. Returning faculty advisor Dr. Elise Fenn and new co-director Dr. Omar Ruvalcaba engaged the community by holding office hours in the Lounge in Sierra Hall 304 every Tuesday, making professional development with experts readily available. CAPS also welcomed Co-Managers Allissa Gordon and Kate Soto Gisler as well as the Media, Marketing, and Mentoring Manager Adrienne Cuevas. All three managers are currently first-year graduate students in different programs—School Psychology, Social Work, and Clinical Psychology. With their aid, our psych students were able to receive thorough integrated perspectives on the different career pathways.

And the team only gets bigger and better! CAPS is happy to host 26 Senior Fellows and 36 Fellows as part of their most popular service, the Fellowship Mentoring Program. Each Senior Fellow is assigned one to three Fellows to guide throughout the semester with personalized mentorship. Our Fellows and casual passersby were able to get detailed advice from our Senior Fellows during their office hours held in the Lounge. These Fellowship match-ups go above and beyond by going to campus events, psychology career and informational events, and most excitingly social and community events. This semester, CAPS hosted 3 Fall Fiestas, 7 workshops, and a week of de-stressing for Finals. Inspired by the great company of their peers, Senior Fellows Sophia Michelson and Chris Hernandez facilitated two student-led hikes. The most popular event of the Fall season is always CAPS' department-wide Lab Trick or Treat. Students trick or treated for candy and internship opportunities across 7 research





labs. CAPS also unmasked their brand-new mascot! Leading up to Halloween, folks were able to vote for this ambassador duck's name, pronouns, and Halloween costume. The people have decided and Cappie (they/them) was able to sport the sweetest little cupcake costume.

If all of this sounds like your cup of tea, we warmly invite you to come join the festivities for Spring Semester. To apply as a freshman, sophomore, first-semester transfer student, or Moorpark College student, please complete the Fellow Interest Form. To apply as a junior or senior CSUN student, you will need to complete the Senior Fellow Interest Form, provide a faculty recommendation, and enroll in PSY 499 A(1 unit), B(2 units), or C(3 units). CAPS will be hosting Training Day for the fresh start on Friday, February 2, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Room TBA). All Senior Fellows are required to attend to stay enrolled in the program. Fellows should plan to arrive at 2 p.m. for snacks and orientation. If you cannot make it to Training Day as a Fellow or do not hear back from a representative within 3-5 business days of completing the surveys, please email [caps@csun.edu](mailto:caps@csun.edu) or [elise.fenn@csun.edu](mailto:elise.fenn@csun.edu).

We want to thank the whole team for making the community lively and bright this Fall and we look forward to seeing the new team for Spring Semester.







## Join Multicultural Psychology Association (MPA) today!



Multicultural Psychological Association (MPA) is open to all Psychology students and its purpose is to help students of all cultures navigate the psychological field and to provide an outlet for educational, personal, and social support. MPA informs students about the current events in the psychological field and all the requirements to get into graduate programs. By connecting students with faculty in the department and assisting them in joining research labs, students get a better understanding of what to expect in the future. MPA also plans social events allowing for students to meet new people and have support from others on their same path.

## The CSUN Chapter of Psi Chi is Accepting Applications!

Psi Chi is an international honors society for psychology students and faculty. In order to join Psi Chi, students must meet the following criteria:

- Major or minor in Psychology
- Completion of 3 semesters of CSUN courses
- Completion of 9 psychology course credit hours
- A minimum GPA of 3.0 in psychology classes
- A minimum overall GPA of 3.0

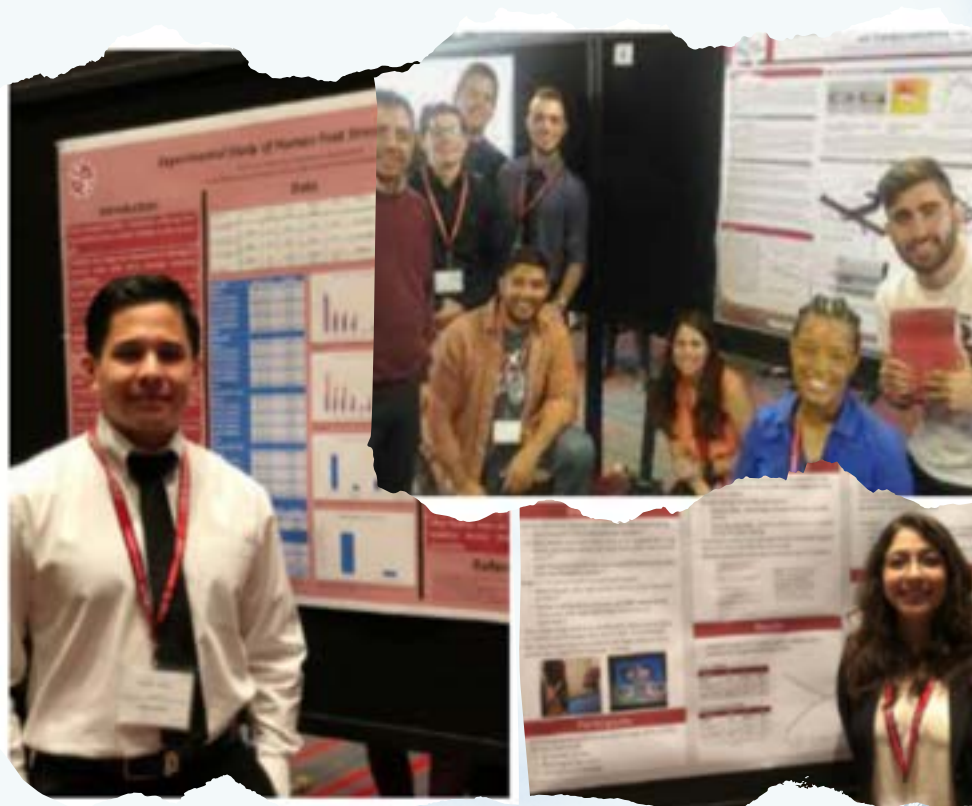
For more information email [psichi2@csun.edu](mailto:psichi2@csun.edu)



# Research in Our Own Backyard: CSUNposium 2024

This is an annual Student Research and Creative Works Symposium conference featuring oral and poster presentations by undergraduate and graduate students. The purpose is to showcase excellence in scholarly research and creative activity conducted by CSUN students across all academic disciplines.

The event will be fully in-person! Both the oral and poster sessions will be held in the University Student Union. **Student application deadline is Wednesday, January 31, 2024 by 12:00 PM** and requires a 1000-character abstract (about 150 words) describing the research or creative work project and faculty approval (all electronic). **The event will be held on Friday, April 5, 2024.**



For more information, visit  
[www.csun.edu/csunposium](http://www.csun.edu/csunposium)

