

WKU DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Accomplishments & Updates

Issue 1 · September 2026



Celebrating with Big Red

It's been a busy Spring and Summer for our department — new grants, new publications, award-winning students, and alumni doing great things all over the country. Here's a look at what our faculty, staff, students, and alumni have been up to.

Faculty & Staff Accomplishments



Five Psychological Sciences faculty recognized at the Ogden College Excellence Awards

Grants & Funding

Dr. Matt Woodward, with **Dr. Austin Griffiths** (Dept. of Social Work), received a **\$1 million award** from the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services, providing an additional two years of funding for the Integrated Family Trauma Treatment Clinic — which provides free mental health services to families in the child welfare system.

Dr. Gigi Petery received an RCAP award for "Validation of the Age-Friendly Workplace Assessment Measurement Tool," a collaboration with Dr. Katrina Burch.

Dr. Amy Brausch received two new grants totaling **\$231,000** to advance suicide prevention. The first, from the Kentucky Cabinet for Justice and Public Safety (\$158,000), brings free Counseling on Access to Lethal Means (CALM) training to clinicians, students, and staff across the region. The second, through Nationwide Children's Hospital's ASPIRES program (\$73,000), tests a new assessment tool for mapping the timeline leading up to adolescent suicide attempts. [\[Read More\]](#)

Dr. Patrick Ledwidge received a four-year, approximately **\$700,000 award from NIAMS** to study the neural mechanisms behind rapid gait adjustments during cognitively demanding movement, using EEG-based mobile brain/body imaging (MoBI). The work aims to inform rehabilitation approaches for people at risk of fall-related and musculoskeletal injury. His co-mentors on the award are Dr. Dusty Grooms (Ohio University) and Dr. Gordon Baylis.

Dr. Jenni Teeters is a Co-Investigator on a new NIH R01 from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (PI: Robert Leeman, Total Funding: **\$3,434,266**), testing a combined peer navigator and web-based intervention for youth at Tampa's YBOR youth clinic to prevent HIV and reduce alcohol use — including drinks per week, frequency of drinking, and alcohol-related sexual consequences.

Dr. Diane Lickenbrock and **Lily Haynes** received the KY-INBRE Student Development Research Grant.

Publications

An article co-authored by **Dr. Matt Woodward**, **Dr. Jenni Teeters**, and students **Caitlin McGettrick** and **Olivia Dick** has been **cited more than 80 times** since it was published last year. [\[DOI\]](#)

Dr. Andrew Mienaltowski's first-author manuscript — with **Dr. Farley Norman** and students **E. Knapp**, **B. Lowe**, and **B. Pruetz** as coauthors — was published in *Cognition & Emotion*: "Emotion labeling varies with lexical complexity more than age in face pareidolia images." [\[DOI\]](#)

Dr. Aaron Wichman saw four major open-science articles appear this year — the product of large multi-site collaborations that began years before the pandemic: three in *Nature* — on analytical robustness [\[DOI\]](#), reproducibility [\[DOI\]](#), and replicability [\[DOI\]](#) in the social and behavioural sciences — and one in *Advances in Methods and Practices in Psychological Science* [\[DOI\]](#).

Dr. Farley Norman published two articles in the *Journal of Vision* this spring: one with students **William Marcum** and **Maria Carmichael** on how we perceive outdoor spatial relationships [\[DOI\]](#), and the other on judging the mass of colliding objects [\[DOI\]](#).

Dr. Jenni Teeters published **8 papers** with current and former WKU students in 2025–2026 on cannabis-impaired driving, trauma, and substance use — appearing in *Addiction* [\[DOI\]](#), *Cannabis* (in press), *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors* [\[DOI\]](#), *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* [\[DOI\]](#), *Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology* [\[DOI\]](#), *Journal of Child and Adolescent Trauma* [\[DOI\]](#), and *Journal of Drug Education* [\[DOI\]](#). Student co-authors: **Nathan Meredith**, **Alejandro Ramirez**, **Katie Moskal**, **Diamond McCollum**, **Shelby Whalen**, **Sterling Hubbard**, **EmmaJo Briles**, **Lily Milam**, **Caitlin McGettrick**, **Hanna Forrest**, **Flynn Harris**, and **Sidney Traxler**.



Awards & Honors

Five Psychological Sciences faculty were recognized at the **Ogden College Opening Meeting**: **Dr. Diane Lickenbrock** (College and University Outstanding Service Award), **Dr. Amy Brausch** (Conference USA Faculty of the Year and the Prolific Proposer Award), **Dr. Jenni Teeters** (College Outstanding Advising Award), **Dr. Patrick Ledwidge** (Outstanding Junior Faculty Teaching Award), and **Dr. Katrina Burch** (Kentucky Psychological Association Researcher of the Year).

Kelli Truelove, co-advisor of WKU's Psi Chi chapter since July 2021, helped drive major growth this year — 28 new members inducted, double last year's total — and partnered with the new Psychological Sciences Club on a "speed friending" event now being scaled into a college-wide activity. Psi Chi's national office sent a letter of appreciation recognizing her leadership.

Paul Sanford and **Dr. Gigi Petery** attended the Wakonse Conference on Inspiring Teaching (CICT) — both had fantastic experiences and are looking for others interested in attending in the future.

Spring 2026 **CITL Teaching Honors** went to **Dr. Aaron Wichman**, **Dr. Andy Mienaltowski**, **Dr. Farley Norman**, **Dr. Diane Lickenbrock**, and **Paul Sanford**. Congratulations, all!

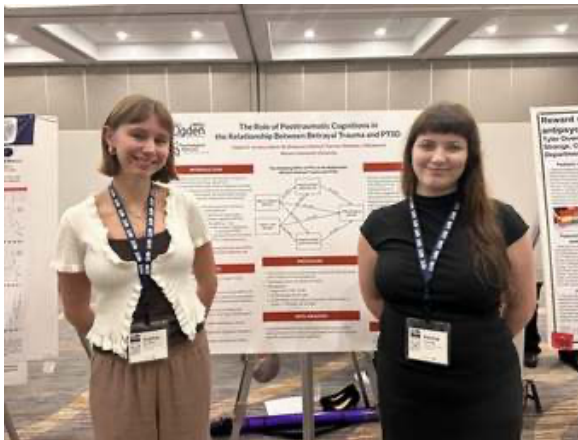




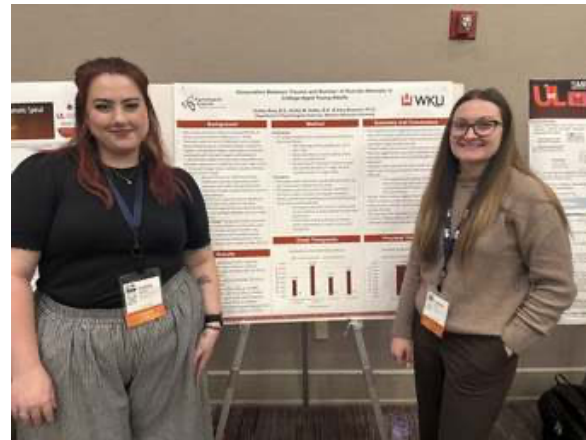
Nathan Meredith presenting at RSMJ



Johnathan Wright, 2nd place at KY-INBRE



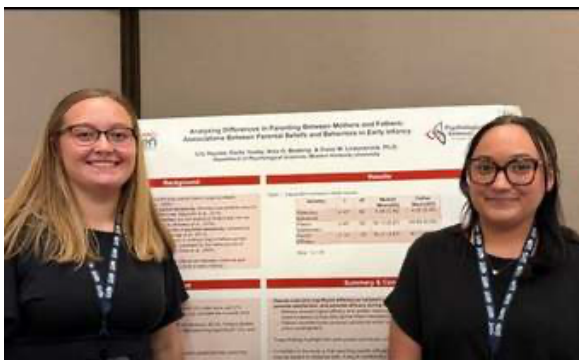
Sophie Jerome & Hanna Forrest at KY-INBRE



Morgan Kelley & Amber Bow at KY-INBRE

Student Accomplishments

Our students have been busy sharing their research with the world — traveling to conferences across the country this year to present their findings to audiences well beyond WKU.



Lily Haynes & Nadia Tooley at KY-INBRE



Alejandro Ramirez presenting at KY-INBRE



Spring and Summer Conferences & Presentations

National IDeA Symposium on Biomedical Research Excellence (NISBRE) — Bethesda, MD

Nathan Meredith, Alejandro Ramirez, Jaime Heckler, Hanna Forrest, Sophie Jerome, Amber Bow

Kentucky IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (KY-INBRE) Annual Research Conference — Louisville, KY

Alejandro Ramirez (flash talk & poster), Hanna Forrest, Sophie Jerome, Jaime Heckler, Nathan Meredith, Amber Bow, Lily Haynes, William Marcum, Morgan Kelley, Nadia Tooley, Ama Boateng, Avery Sutton, Kimario Davis, Bristol Cobb, Paul Calloway, Camille Ratcliff, Lily Newton, Caleigh Lundy, and **Johnathan Wright** (2nd Place, Neuroscience/Psychology category)

Research Society on Marijuana (RSMJ) — Albuquerque, NM

Nathan Meredith (Diversity Award), Alejandro Ramirez

Midwestern Psychological Association (MPA) — Chicago, IL

Ama Boateng, Amber Bow, Jaime Heckler, Nathan Meredith

National LGBTQ Health Conference — Chicago, IL

Amber Bow, Nathan Meredith

Vision Sciences Society Annual Meeting — St. Pete Beach, FL

William Marcum, M. Carmichael, E. Hagan, C. Del Savio, A. Sheehan, A. Sutton

Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) — Chicago, IL

Johnathan Wright, Jade Ismail



Alumni Updates



Where They Are Now



McKenzie Gunter (BS Psychological Science, '21), a former undergraduate researcher in Dr. Farley Norman's lab, just started her career as a brand-new Assistant Professor at Valdosta State University in Georgia.

Alex Gehring is in her second and final year of WKU's MSW program, training to become a clinical social worker. This summer she was one of two students to win the Healthcare Workforce Investment Fund Scholarship through CAYA Collaborative Care (formerly LifeSkills), and has begun an internship there. In her words: *"I will be using my passion for clinical psychology and social work to help individuals with trauma and mental illness build meaningful and independent lives."*

Zeke Pendleton is in WKU's counseling Master's program (Marriage, Family & Couples track) and graduates in May.



Sidney Traxler (and her wonderful pup, Jake) started the Clinical Psychology PhD program at the University of Memphis.

Anne Schueler (now Harris) graduated from WKU's counseling Master's program and is now a Behavioral Health Professional at Phoenix Preferred Care in Somerset, KY.

Shelby King (now Whalen) starts this summer as a staff psychologist at the Johnson City VAMC, in one of the largest residential substance use treatment programs in the country.



Dr. Jordan Gregory is a Licensed Psychologist (PsyD). After earning her bachelor's and Master's in Psychological Science at WKU — splitting her time between the Child Development and Risk Behaviors labs — she completed doctoral training at Xavier University and now works across a range of clinical settings, giving her a breadth of experience treating individuals across the lifespan.

Chloe Meehan was just promoted to Assistant Manager of Clinical Research at WashU (WUSTL) — and also contributes data analysis to a grant studying epilepsy and EEG.

Eliza Laves heads into her clinical internship this year at the Indiana University Counseling Center.



Carly McPherson graduated from WKU in 2026 with a Master of Science in Psychological Sciences. She's now a Program Coordinator in the Brain Stimulation Lab at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), handling data acquisition and EEG processing for a study on Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) in patients with Major Depressive Disorder, and contributing to a separate study on TMS in stroke survivors. In her words: *"Through these research opportunities, I have been able to apply the skills and knowledge I developed at WKU while gaining valuable experience in clinical neuroscience research."*

Emily Smith has been working as a Clinical Research Coordinator at UK's Sanders-Brown Center on Aging. In her words: *"Things are going great — I absolutely love my job. I'm still not sure how I landed one that's not only enjoyable and fulfilling, but with amazing coworkers and a great work-life balance."*

Dalton Bailey is Research and Data Manager for the NC Rural Center, a nonprofit focused on rural economic development and well-being.



Madeline Wildman is Lab Manager of the MAClab (Multimethod Affect and Cognition Lab) at Texas A&M University under Dr. Annmarie MacNamara. She oversees recruitment, screening, scheduling, and data collection across three active studies — including transcranial ultrasound stimulation, the effects of emergency contraceptives on fear learning, and the brain and behavioral mechanisms behind anxiety and its overlap with depression — plus data collection and cleaning for a fourth. Her work spans EEG, MRI, and fMRI equipment, alongside the lab's IRB submissions and data management.

Katie Luna just completed her internship year on the Rehabilitation Neuropsychology track in the Dept. of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences at the UW School of Medicine.



Hayden Nelson is in his third year of his Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and just started teaching undergraduate Industrial-Organizational Psychology.

Adalin McDaniel was recently promoted to Senior Human Resources Business Partner Specialist at Astemo Ltd.

Sean Tate recently took a job as Manager of Human Resources and Communications at the Gainesville Regional Airport, leading the HR function after several years in HR at the University of Florida.



Shelby Davis is currently ABD at Colorado State University, working on her Ph.D. in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and planning a future in academia.

Elayna Wichert is the Head of Talent and People Systems at Noble Capital Group.

Payton Pollard transitioned to a full-time Human Resources Specialist at Astemo Ltd. following graduation in May 2026, successfully converting her internship into full-time employment.

Ashley East is a Property & Casualty Risk Engineer with Chubb Insurance.



Melissa Sorensen is ABD at Bowling Green State University, working on her Ph.D. in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and planning a future in external consulting.

Anne Simpson is a Project Manager at Bridges Consulting, a woman-owned consulting firm.

Julia Hong is in her second year of her Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota, studying the intersection of training and gamification.



Have an update for the next issue? Just reply and let us know — we'd love to include it.

WKU Department of Psychological Sciences
