

PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES

<https://www.msudenver.edu/psychological-sciences/>

| August 2025

WELCOME BACK!

2025-2026

academic year

REWIND

A look back at the
previous academic
year

PATH TO SUCCESS

Graduate, Julia
Sickrey discusses her
experience at MSU
Denver as a psychology
student



**DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGICAL
SCIENCES**

PO Box 173362

Campus Box 54

Denver, CO 80217-3362

(303) 615-0699

**F U L L - T I M E
F A C U L T Y A N D
S T A F F**

DEPARTMENT CHAIR Lisa Badanes, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE CHAIR Courtney Rocheleau, Ph.D.

LECTURER Sol Adams, M.A.

PROFESSOR Pamela Ansborg, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR Cassandra Bailey, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Layton Seth Curl, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR Cynthia Erickson, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Bethany Fleck Dillen, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Mo Flynn, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Chris Garris, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Lisa Hagan, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Bill Henry, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Jovan Hernandez, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Katherine Hill, Ph.D.

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PROFESSOR Chris Randell, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Aaron Richmond, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Anna Ropp, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Cheryl Sanders, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Bob Schatz, Ph.D.

PROFESSOR Randi Smith, Ph.D.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR Sam Barber, Ph.D.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR Rebecca Bryan, Ph.D.

ACADEMIC ADVISOR Nicole Davis

ACADEMIC ADVISOR Tor Ehler, Ph.D.

PA-I Martina Grasse

OFFICE GUY Thai Intara

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Kudos

The 24-25 academic year ended with a handful of rightfully deserving award winners and accomplishments



Welcome to the Fall 2025 semester! I want to extend a heartfelt welcome to each of you and wish you success and growth in the coming year. The Department of Psychological Sciences provides a rich academic environment with a diverse range of online and in-person courses, as well as opportunities for students to deepen their connections with faculty, staff, and students alike. Whether you participate in one of our student clubs like Psi Chi or Research Club, connect to industry partners through our Psyched to Work! job shadowing program, or enroll as a research or teaching assistant, we are here to support you on your journey. We have THE BEST team of professional advisors and front office staff who are knowledgeable, approachable, and can answer any questions you might have. As department chair, I am always open to meeting with students if you have any questions or concerns. Reach out to

APRIL 17, 2025

Kaysie McGurk, Reed Pennell, JC, Juan Guevara celebrating at the annual End of Year Student Celebration and Psi Chi induction event.



APRIL 10, 2025

Ezra Toledo, Bug Bobitsky, De Bright, Justin Montoya, and Dr. Aaron Richmond at the annual RMPA department dinner.



me anytime at lbadianes@msudenver.edu. Our student lounge has received a makeover to ensure that it is both comfortable and useful to you in between your classes or other responsibilities, so please feel free to use it whenever is convenient. I wish you an amazing year ahead!



Dr. Lisa Badanes

MEET OUR NEWEST ADVISORS



REBECCA BRYAN

REBECCA: I'm Rebecca (she/her). I have been teaching in the biology department at MSU Denver since 2012. I love getting to know all the different students at Metro with their varied backgrounds. I always learn so much from teaching students whose interests are so diverse, and I can't wait to start working as an advisor to help them find their way.

A little bit about me: I graduated with a BA in Integrated Theater with an Anthropology minor from the University of Colorado Denver. After graduation I worked for several years as: an Animal Trainer at Colorado's Ocean Journey (now The Downtown Aquarium), a Stage Manager at Bovine Metropolis Theater, a Dresser at the Denver Center for Performing Arts, a Site Manager at City Bark

Doggie Daycare Lodo, and the Behavior Supervisor at Denver Dumb Friends League.

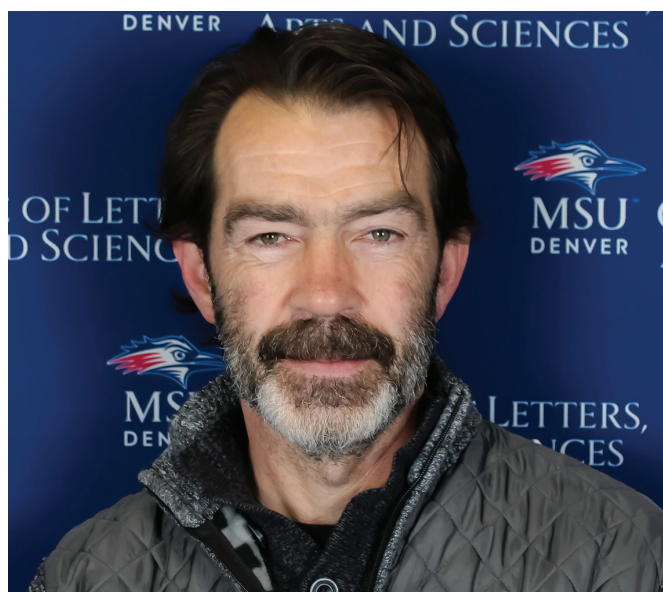
Seeing as how the majority of those jobs involved animal care (or herding actors, which is pretty darn close), I decided to go back to school to get a Master's Degree in Animal Behavior at CU Denver, which I completed in 2012.

My husband and I have 3 furry kids at home: 2 cats (Odin and Freya) and a dog (Ozzie - Oswald M. Fluffington IV). Don't ask me what the M stands for; we have no idea. It just sounded good.

I tend to read mostly fiction when I get the chance to relax and read. I'm a sci-fi and fantasy bookworm (yes, I'll admit it), and I also love a good (but never gory) cozy mystery or historical fiction novel. Other interests include swimming, hiking, paddle boarding, crochet, and playing with the dog.

TOR: I have been with MSU Denver since 2010 as Adjunct Faculty in the English department. My background is in writing & literature. At Naropa University's Jack

Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics, I studied writing in prose, then pursued literary studies at the University of Denver. At this point, I practice translation from the Czech to English, with a focus on a 19th century Czech literary icon and a contemporary speculative fiction Czech writer. My interests range from socio-linguistics to political science, to gardening, to alchemy.



TOR EHLER

MAY 15, 2025

Julia graduates with honors as she ends her successful undergraduate career. Up next... graduate school.

Small Steps, Big Impact:

Julia Sickrey's Path to Confidence and Research Success

When Julia Sickrey moved from Michigan to Denver in August 2019, she did not expect that a simple classroom question would set her on a path toward national recognition and personal growth. But through a series of small decisions, rooted in curiosity and supported by strong mentorships, she found herself thriving in spaces she once never imagined en-

Stepping forward

Presenting at the annual Western Psychological Association Convention.

San Francisco, California April 2024



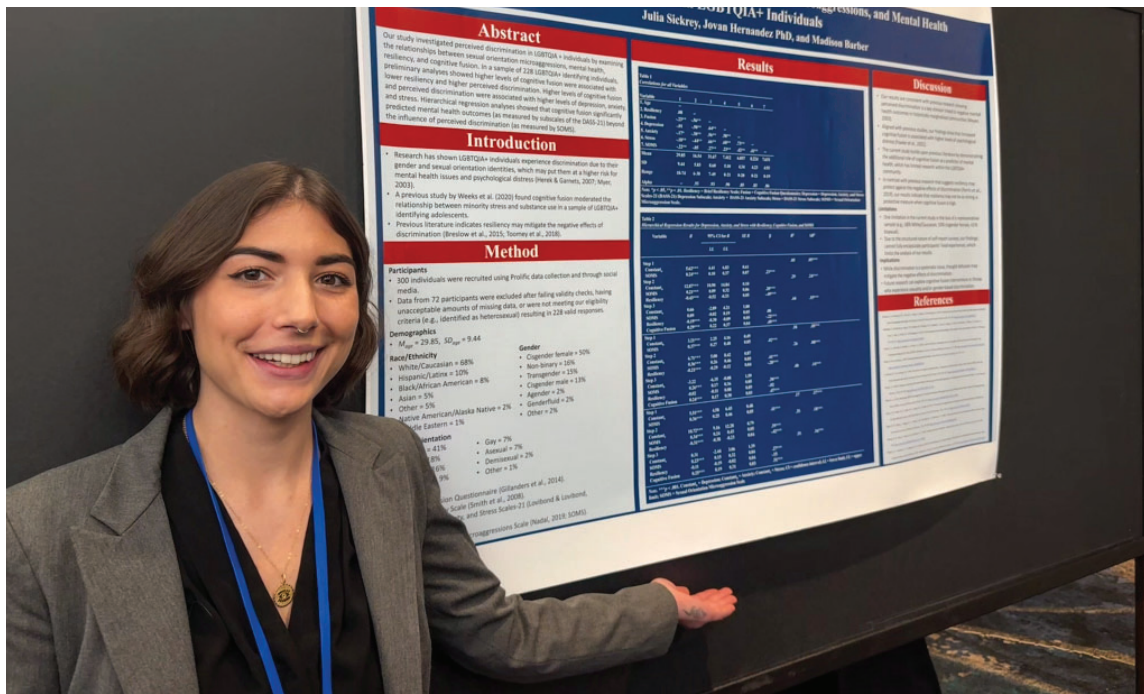
tering.

Julia began her college journey at Arapahoe Community College in spring 2020 before transferring to MSU Denver. Initially a political science major in fall 2021, she soon discovered that her true interests lay in understanding people, their emotions, and mental health. By spring 2022, she had switched her major to psychology.

It was a conversation after Dr. Pam Ansborg's Careers in Psychology class that everything started to shift. Julia asked Dr. Ansborg, "What's the best way to prepare for graduate school?" Dr. Ansborg's advice was clear: get experience.

That simple recommendation sparked a cascade of meaningful decisions—joining the Psychology Research Club in fall 2022, seeking mentorship, and eventually becoming a research assistant.

"I was encouraged to reach out," Julia said. "Madi Barber, who was a member of the



"I realized I was actually having fun. I wasn't just attending, I was thriving."



EPA DIVERSITY AWARD

Julia is presented the Eastern Psychological Association Diversity Award in addition to a \$250 prize in New York city.

Psychology Research Club and had been a research assistant before me, referred me to Dr. Jovan Hernandez—and that connection made all the difference.”

Working with Dr. Hernandez, Julia engaged in research centered on resiliency, cognitive fusion, and mental health discrimination. She presented her first project at the Undergraduate Research Conference in spring 2023, marking her debut in academic presentation—and setting the stage for what was to come.

By spring 2024, Julia was presenting at both the Rocky Mountain Psychological Association (RMPA) and the Western Psychological Association (WPA) Conferences. WPA left a lasting impression—not just academically, but personally.

“I gained more confidence—not just as a student, but in who I am,” she shared. “Being in a supportive space with people who understood me helped me feel more comfortable with my sexual orientation and more accepting of myself overall.”

This growing sense of confidence prepared Julia for her most prominent opportunity yet: presenting at the Eastern Psychological Association (EPA) Conference in spring 2025 in New York City. Not only did she share her research on a national stage, but she also received the EPA Diversity Award, which included a \$250 prize.

Psychological Sciences

"The award was presented during a keynote event, and I remember thinking, I really belong here. It was such a proud moment," she said. "We were in Times Square, trying new foods, and even went to the opera. I realized I was actually having fun. I wasn't just attending, I was thriving."

Throughout this journey, Julia points to the steady support of her mentors. "Dr. Hernandez was more than just a faculty advisor—he believed in me when I wasn't sure I believed in myself. His support changed my trajectory and helped me see what was possible."

Now, Julia is preparing to begin her master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at UCCS in May 2025. After exploring programs at CSU, UCD, and UCCS, she ultimately chose the one where she felt most aligned with the mission and community.

Looking back, she shares a few lessons for others who may be at the start of their own journeys:

"Get out of your comfort zone. It may seem boring or intimidating at first, but if an opportunity presents itself—take it. You are smart enough. You do deserve to be there." And perhaps most importantly:

"At MSU Denver, faculty truly care. We're not an R1 institution, and that's actually a strength—students come first. Everyone here wants to see you succeed, even when you're still figuring out what success looks like for you."



From transferring colleges to standing proudly on stage in Times Square, Julia Sickrey's journey is a testament to how the smallest questions can lead to the biggest breakthroughs.

Kat's Cafe:

Summer's Best Tomato Salad

By Martina Grasse (originally by my Great Grandmother, adapted by
my Mom, and then me)

The Basics, per person:

1 medium tomato

1-2t finely chopped onion

1T vinegar

Pepper and Salt (see optional note)

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE...



MORE OPTIONS:

Make it Greek, add half rounds of cucumber, leave the onion in slightly larger slices, add a touch of olive oil, a tiny bit of oregano and if you have them a few Kalamata olives.



The Details:

Tomato: Any ripe tomato will work, you want about 1cup of bite sized chunks (not too small) per person. If using cherry tomatoes cut in half, cocktail tomatoes (like Campari) cut into 6th, Roma tomatoes cut into 6th or 8th and then in half (across the equator) If you can get one of Dr. Bob's Black Krim they are amazing, but any ripe tomato will work. If you love tomato, use a large tomato per person...

Onion: any fresh onion will work, yellow, red, white, sweet (my fave,) shallot, scallion. Finely dice or mince 1-2 teaspoons per tomato (more if you like onion.)

Vinegar: again your preference – plain white will work (it is what my great grandmother used) I like to use balsamic (I find one that has 5-10 calories per tablespoon) or you can gussie it up with red or white wine or even sherry or champagne vinegar. The only ones I would not use are apple cider or malt vinegars. If you like it milder, add a spoonful of water.

Pepper: fresh ground black is great, but if you prefer white, or just have the pre ground, no worries.

Salt: a sprinkle of salt, OR a tablespoon of crumbled Feta cheese.

Mix together and let stand about 10 minutes for the flavors to get acquainted. Mix again and enjoy.

My Great Grandmother added a few drops of oil (olive or more likely vegetable) along with the vinegar, mom left that out, I changed to balsamic; What will you do to make it yours?

What I do: 3 medium Roma tomatoes cut into 6th and then across the middle so 12 chunks per tomato, 2T chopped sweet Vidalia onion, 1T Feta crumbles, a generous grinding of black pepper, 2T balsamic vinegar.

This is perfect on a hot summer day, even better if you chill it a bit before serving though the tomato has more flavor served at room temp.

Cooking Passion

Martina Grasse is our Office Manager and Senior Assistant to the Chair. But her true passion is in the culinary arts.





2025 Distinguished
Alumnus Recipient
Nathan J. Mondragon, Ph.D.

CLASS OF 1987

Dr. Nathan Mondragon is the Chief Innovation Officer at HireVue where he manages a 'startup' team that consists of people from science, product, data, and engineering. This team creates products that blend the best of science and technology that keep HireVue at the forefront of providing talent intelligence solutions. Nathan has over 30 years of extensive experience in creating software solutions that are driven by science. Most notably Nathan led or co-led:

- the creation and delivery of the first ever online selection assessment in 1996,
- the ground up build of the first integrated assessment solution and \$30M practice within an enterprise-wide ATS (Taleo) in 2004, and
- as part of HireVue built and delivered the first-ever AI-driven pre-hire assessment solution in 2016.

Nathan has spoken with Congress and the White House on the proper methods to use AI to facilitate employment decisions. He has over 100 manuscripts, peer reviewed paper and book chapters, presentations, and workshops on IO Psychology and technology solutions. He has been quoted, interviewed, or featured on NPR, BBC, WSJ, Bloomberg, USA Today, and HBO about the best practices and future of science enabled talent decisions. Nathan received his B.S. in Psychology from Metropolitan State University of Denver and his Ph.D. in Industrial and Organizational Psychology from Colorado State University.



Annual Student Celebration and Alumnus Award Dinner

April 17, 2025.

Dr. Nathan J. Mondragon receives the Outstanding Alumnus award presented by Dr. Katherine Hill from the Department of Psychological Sciences.

Kudos & Acknowledgment

Hard Work. Real Impact. Well Deserved.



BROOKE HARMON

Receives the 2024-2025 Mary Ann Watson Endowed Psychology Scholarship, with scholarship Chair Dr. Bob Schatz, and Professor Emeritus, Dr. Mary Ann Watson.

DR. BILL HENRY

Receives the 2024-2025 Psi Chi Excellence in Teaching award for fulltime faculty. Presented by MSU Denver Psi Chi chapter President, Julia Sickrey.



ACADEMIC ADVISORS OF THE YEAR

Dr. Sam Barber receives the 2025 CLAS Academic Advisor of the Year award. Presented by Dr. John Masserini, Dean of College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences with Dr. Lisa Badanes, Department Chair.



Psychological Sciences



BRYAN FLORES

Winner of the College, Letters, Arts, and Sciences Graduate Honoree award with Dr. Cassandra Bailey, Dr. Lisa Badanes, and Dean of CLAS, Dr. John Masserini.



RAY MARTIN

Receives the 2024-2025 Psi Chi Excellence in Teaching award for adjunct faculty. Presented by MSU Denver Psi Chi chapter President, Julia Sickrey.



ASHLEY BLONDO

Receives the 2024-2025 Psychology/Human Development & Family Studies Promising Teacher award. Presented by Dr. Lisa Hagan.



AUSTIN BROWNING

Receives the Outstanding Junior Psychology/Human Development & Family Studies Researcher award. Presented by Dr. Courtney Rocheleau.



JUSTIN MONTOYA

Receives the Outstanding Senior Psychology/Human Development & Family Studies Researcher award. Presented by Dr. Aaron Richmond.

**JULIA SICKREY**

Receives the Outstanding Senior Psychology/Human Development & Family Studies Scholar award. Presented by Dr. Jovan Hernandez.

**DR. CYNTHIA ERICKSON**

Winner of the Golich Award as the Outstanding Mentor for Undergraduate Research with Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Matt Makley.

**DR. PAM ANSBURG**

Winner of the showcase SOAR Awards for creating, implementing, and growing the Psyched 2 Work! Program. Joined by Dr. Bethany Fleck Dillen, Metropolitan State University President, Dr. Janine Davidson, Dr. Lisa Badanes, Dr. Mark Basham, and of course Rowdy!



ENGAGEMENT, ENJOYMENT, AND EXPERIENCE



SHOUTOUT TO THE DIFFERENCE-MAKERS

Clubs and Officers fall 2024 spring 2025

Clinical/Counseling Club

- President – Vilma Moreno
- Vice President – Angel Tasto
- Treasurer – Kimberly Caceres
- Secretary – Madison Penny
- Social Media Manager – AJ Metlay
- Marketing Manager – Arien Sanchez-Aguilar

Psi Chi International Honor Society - MSU Denver Chapter

- President – Julia Sickrey
- Vice President – Molly Middleton
- Treasurer – Henry Rutherford
- Secretary – LaKrisha Fehringer
- Social Media Coordinator – Brook Harmon
- Fundraising Coordinator – Ethan Latham
- Marketing Manager – Arien Sanchez-Aguilar
- Volunteer Coordinator – Stefy Calero Ayala

Research Club

- President – Ezra Toledo
- Vice President – LaKrisha Fehringer
- Treasurer – Drew Cornelius
- Secretary – Bug Bobitsky
- Membership Officer – Benji Del Barco



CELEBRATING THE DOERS

Research and Teaching Assistants fall 2024 spring 2025

Faculty Mentor: Cassandra Bailey

Research Assistants:

Chelo Aguilar

LaKrisha Fehringer

Abigail Mendez

Justin Montoya

Daniel Rueda Rodríguez

Faculty Mentor: Cynthia Erickson

Research Assistants:

Ayden Joshi

Brandon Martinez

Nick Miller

Nana Akua Adu Owusu

Faculty Mentor: Bethany Fleck Dillen

Research Assistants:

Maria Mondragon

Faculty Mentor: Chad Mortensen

Research Assistants:

Josh Isom

Faculty Mentor: Chris Randell

Research Assistants:

Henry Rutherford

Angel Tasto

Dora Yagudayeva

Faculty Mentor: Randi Smith

Research Assistants:

Alan Blankenship

Jillian Chambers

Jake Hanson

Faculty Mentor: Bill Henry

Research Assistants:

Deanna Bright

Austin Browning

Abby Drabing

Meley Hagos

Leif Kenamond

Molly Middleton

Justin Montoya

Ezra Toledo

Haley Webb

Joslyn Welker

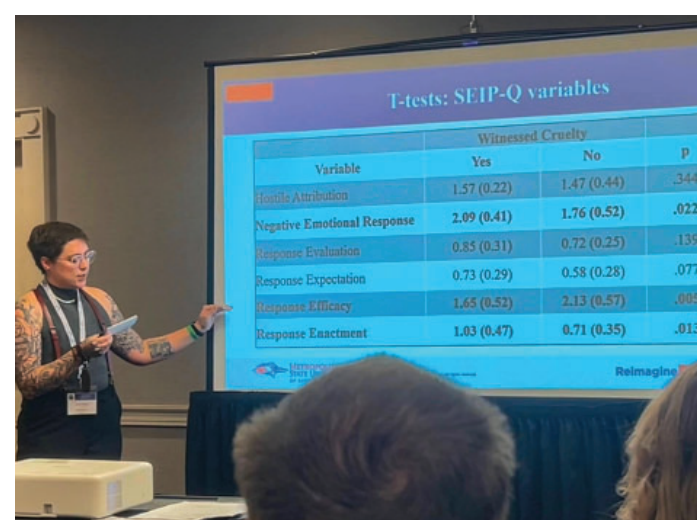
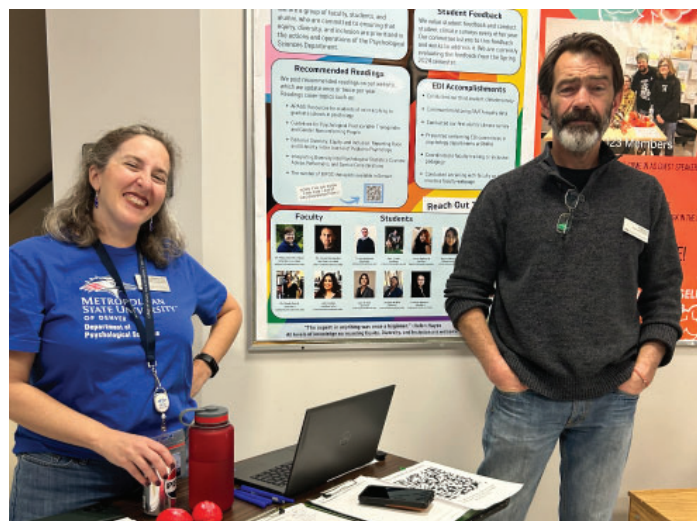
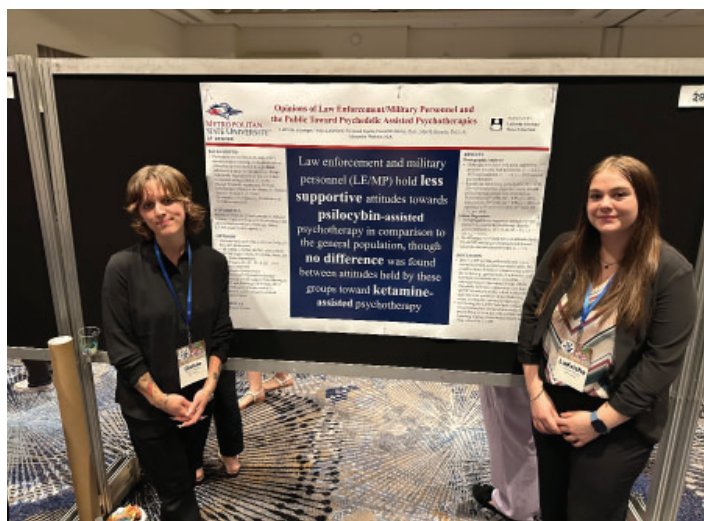
Faculty Mentor: Jovan Hernandez

Research Assistants:

Deanna Bright

Angelina Djibilova

Julia Sickrey



TURNING EXPERIENCE INTO OPPORTUNITY

From Internships to Conferences
fall 2024 spring 2025

Internships

Tess K. Arace

Jayson L. Arko

Chelsey B. Barker

Annsley L. Beith

Hayley Bell-Harris

Alan W. Blankenship

Adam J. Bleyle

Bakari D. Broughton

Alyssa Byndum

Stefy C. Calero Ayala

Rajina Caparachini

Danicka Carey

Ericka G. Carias

Ela L. Celik

Julia Coates

Daniel J. Coniff

Kayla L. Connell

Kaylee J. Cross

Sydney E. Danenberger

Lorianne Dovidio

Sophia Fine

Bryan H. Flores

Katie French

Jennifer R. Gorka

William P. Grant

Yekaterina Grigoryeva

Monica M. Guarin

Milan Gutierrez

Jake M. Hansen

Brooke Harmon

Jericha Huntzinger

Sara K. Ikenberry

Janette A. Jackson

Tanner A. Jennings

Jasmine I. Joel

Taeyonna B. Johnson

Mackinzy F. Jones

Kalista M. Kuchka

Genesis A. Larsen

Jacob R. Leask

Cami J. Lee

Diego S. Maldonado Lopez

To honor and recognize the students who put forth the effort to step outside their comfort zone, continuing from classroom knowledge to real-world experiences through internships and conferences.

Demetrio Martinez

Jackson T. Maxwell

Ren R. McIntire-Baughner

Sequoia M. McNeil

Nicole E. Mendoza

AJ J. Metlay

Abby I. Nayback

Karina Okoren

Rocio I. Padilla

Madison Park

Madison J. Penny

Aubrey C. Pickrell

Letitia M. Ramirez

Eleanor G. Rapoport

Leslie A. Sanchez Medel

Emily Sands

Marla Santoyo

Olivia Schneller

Dane R. Showalter

Romeo D. Sloan

Tristan B. Smietana

Jenna P. Smith

Alexandria A. Stephens

Julia E. Stevens

Tori L. Thayer

Eva J. Torres

Timothy A. Villier

amir R. Whittington-Edit

Alyssa Williams

Myka S. Williams

Monica Zamora



Conference Participants

Rocky Mountain Psychological Association 2025, Denver, Colorado

Alan Blankenship	LaKrisha Gehringer	Justin Montoya	Angel Tasto
Ashley Blondo	Meley Hagos	Vilma Moreno	Ezra Toledo
Bug Bobitsky	Jake Hanson	Adrianna Newport	Allison Villa
Deanna Bright	Brook Harmon	Daniel Niewiarowicz	Haley Webb
Austin Browning	Kyle Jones	Reed Pennell	Joslyn Welker
Rachel Chaggaris	Leif Kenamond	Sylvia Rodriguez	Dora Yagudayeva
Drew Cornelius	Sequoia McNiel	Arianna Rosales	
Landon Daniels	Kasey Mears	Henry Rutherford	
Tiyana Dennis	Michaela Meier	Julia Sickrey	
Abby Drabing	Molly Middleton	Tristin Smietana	



2025 Undergraduate Research Conference Denver, Colorado

Benji Del Barco	Brandon Martinez	Nick Miller	Nana Akua Adu Owusu
Bryan Flores	Averie McClain	Maria Mondragon	Reed Pennell
Kyle Jones	Kasey Mears	Vilma Moreno	Arianna Rosales
Ayden Joshi	Michaela Meier	Daniel Niewiarowicz	Ezra Toledo

American Law Society, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Chelo Aguilar	Abigail Mendez	LaKrisha Fehringer	Daisia Litherland
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Western Psychological Association, Las Vegas, Nevada

Averie McClain	Maria Mondragon
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Eastern Psychological Association, New York, New York

Julia Sickrey

Association for Psychological Sciences, Washington, D.C.

Nana Akua Adu Owusu	Ayden Joshi	Nick Miller
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Psyched to Work!

Student Representatives

Juniper Alexander	Ashley Duarte-Bernal	Catherine Kilroy	London Rollins
Celes Backlund	Valentina Egan	Jena Lange	Maiya Schmidt
Ashley Blondo	Ashlyn Etcheson	Diego Maldonado Lopez	Grace Skinner
Ellyssia Bortz	Peyton Farber	Michaela Meier	Jasmine Strong
Kimberly Caceres	Russel Hanneman	AJ Metlay	Sophie Tessier
Danicka Carey	Alice Hardesty	Elise Midcap	Aimee Theroux
Jerry Castellanos	Michaela Hieb	Ilse Amateco Nava	Manuel Torres
Kat Conte	Daejnaye Jenkins	Stephanie Ramos	Sarai Troeger
Jaida Cortez	Tanner Jennings	Eleanor Rapoport	Deanna Wakeman
Amaya Crump	Nihaalee Joshi	Shereem Rivera-Maldonado	
Gavin Curwick	Ayden Joshi	Amy Robles	
Benjamin Del barco	Loveleen Kaur	Sylvia Rodriguez	



Department of Psychological Sciences

SPECIAL THANKS

Internship Host Sites

17th Judicial District Probation, Commerce City
 17th Judicial District Probation, Westminster
 1st Judicial District Probation
 A Precious Child
 Antelope Recovery
 Arapahoe County Human Services
 Aurora Public School: Jennifer
 Aurora Public School: Nicole
 Breakthrough
 Cherry Creek School District: Social Work
 Children's Hospital: 16th Ave-Jennifer Harris
 Children's Hospital: Arista Place-Kim Weber
 Children's Hospital: North Campus-Angela Meining
 Children's Hospital: Potomac-Dana Weatherbee
 Children's Hospital: Potomac-Faith Dincler
 Children's Hospital: Potomac-Lorena Bustamente
 Children's Hospital: Ridgeline-Jamie Erickson
 Children's Hospital: Smoky Hill-Adrienne Sarff
 Children's Hospital: Telstar-Erin Inghram
 Children's Hospital: Telstar-Martha Stender

Colorado Youth for Change
 Intervention
 Metro Mayor's Caucus Civic Results
 Mile High Behavioral Health
 MSU Denver Academic Advisor: Nicole Davis
 MSU Denver Academic Advisor: Rebecca Bryan
 MSU Denver Academic Advisor: Sam Barber
 MSU Denver Academic Advisor: Torgeir Ehler
 MSU Denver C2 Hub Student Success and Retention
 MSU Denver Denver Human Resources
 MSU Denver Public Service Program
 MSU Denver: CTLD Assistant Director
 MSU Denver: CTLD Instructional Design
 Psychology Professor: Chris Garriss
 Psychology Professor: Dr. Randi Smith
 SAMSHA
 Treeline Pass
 University of Denver: Office of Teaching and Learning
 Westminster Police Department

Learning Assistants

Scarlet Jauregui Carreon
 Eve Chadwick
 Simon Cheistwer
 Nick Miller

Feline Fix 4 Kittens (Oversaw Destress Kitten event in collaboration with Martina)

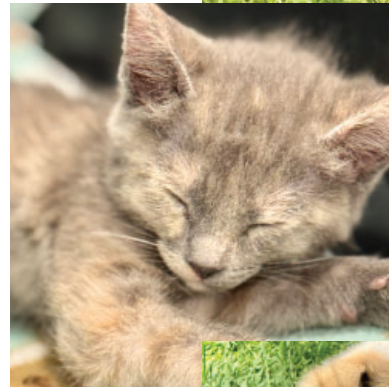
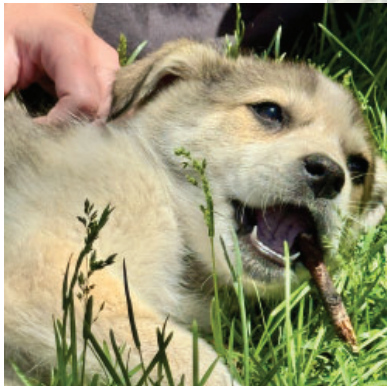
Ash Bishop
 Sandra Holder

Pup Quiz Destress Event Hosted by MSU Denver Health Institute

Lifeline Puppy Rescue - <https://www.lifelinepuppy.org/>
 Katie Scarlett Day - MSU Denver Health Institute

<https://www.msudenver.edu/psychological-sciences/>

Courtesy of *Feline Fix for Kittens* and *Lifeline Puppy Rescue* (spring 2025)



AUGUST
2025