FALL 23

COGSCI NEWSLETTER

M | LSA WEINBERG INSTITUTE
FOR COGNITIVE SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

LETTER FROM DIRECTOR

Dear Michigan Cognitive Science alumni,

I hope this letter finds you well. Let me start by introducing myself. I'm Chandra Sripada, and I'm the new director of the Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science. Our former director, Rick Lewis, led the charge for cognitive science for six years. Over that time, cognitive science grew and thrived. We are now a top twelve major in LSA (with more than 400 majors), we have a popular graduate certificate program, and so much more! We thank Professor Lewis for his amazing leadership, and I know I have very big shoes to fill.

We have had an exciting and eventful year. A few highlights: Michigan demolished Ohio State –maybe more thoroughly than Chomsky demolished Skinner (Cogsci 200 folks will appreciate that one). Our 11th Anniversary Marshall M. Weinberg Symposium, on the theme of Computational Psychiatry, brought together over 200 people worldwide. Also, a strike reminded us how much our graduate students contribute to learning and growth inside and outside the classroom, and we welcome them back.

Here's another thing that happened this past year. ChatGPT (you might have heard about it?) was released in November, 2022, and it's clear that a seismic shift is underway. The rise of generative artificial intelligence (AI) is shaking things up in cognitive science. For the first time, we are seeing "sparks" of intelligence-like capacities in artificial systems. These developments are opening up exciting new frameworks and models for thinking about how human minds work. Even the limitations of these machines (and there are many!) are teaching us about distinctive capacities of human minds that might otherwise go unappreciated. One of my goals as Weinberg Institute director is to make sure Michigan cognitive science students are at the forefront of the interface between cognitive science and generative AI. We are reimagining the cognitive science learning experience through courses, symposiums, and tutorials to meet the changes and opportunities that lie ahead.

This Alumni Newsletter is a way to stay in touch and let you know about Cognitive Science-related developments at Michigan. But it is also a way for us to hear from YOU. Our alumni are a truly AMAZING group, thinking up new ideas, building new tools, taking on new challenges, and all around just doing cool things. Please drop us a note and let us know what you are up to – we'd love to hear from you.

We wish you and your family and friends a happy and healthy year, and Go Blue!

On behalf of the Weinberg Institute staff and faculty,

Dr. Chandra Sripada,
Director, Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science

WEINBERG INSTITUTE UPDATES

2023 MARSHALL M. WEINBERG SYMPOSIUM

The 2023 Marshall. M. Weinberg Symposium was held in person on Friday and Saturday, March 25 and 26. The theme of the symposium was "Coputational Psychiatry: From Mental Circuits to Mental Illness." The symposium presented a range of contrasting and complementary perspectives from leaders in psychiatry, neuroscience, and philosophy. The panelists were Paul Fletcher, Peggy Seriès, Eran Eldar, Xiaosi Gu, and Matteo Colombo.

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COGSCI COMMUNITY COLLOQUIUM

The 7th annual Cognitive Science Community Colloquium was held in person on Monday, April 10, 2023 for the first time since 2019. This years theme was "Community in Action", and as always this is an academic conference geared toward showing off undergraduate research, connecting cognitive scientists to undergraduates, and encouraging an interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge. Speakers this year were included a keynote speaker, two honors students, and two CSC focus groups.

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OPENING DOORS: HIRING A COGSCI MAJOR

When choosing Cognitive Science as a major, third year computation track student Arvin Yaple was worried about job prospects after graduation with the field being new, but that isn't the case anymore. Arvin now says his experience is anything but, saying "more doors have been opened because of the versatility and customizability of the major".

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2023 AWARD WINNERS

SERVICE AWARD

ALICIA HAUN

ROBERT J. GLUSHKO THESIS AWARD

HATTIE BENEDETTI

SAM EPSTEIN AWARD

SHUCHEN WEN

FACULTY UPDATES

SUSAN GELMAN NAMED AAAS FELLOW

Afficilate faculty member **Dr. Gelman**, a Heinz Werner Distinguished University Professor of Psychology and Linguistics, was one of the 17 University of Michigan faculty and staff members elected by The American Association for the Advancement of Science as a 2022 fellow.

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IN THE TIMES: CHANDRA SRIPADA

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ENVIRONMENTAL IMPASSIVITY

People who respond less emotionally to images of damage to the environment are also less emotional and empathic in general, according to a new University of Michigan study. 2018 Philosophy and Cognition Alumni **Logan Bickel's** Research has been published with affiliated faculty member **Stephanie Preston** in *Emotion,* Volume 23, Issue 4 (Jun 2023).

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DR. SHAH APPOINTED AS THE NEW PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT CHAIR

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NOTE FROM PREVIOUS DIRECTOR RICHARD LEWIS

When Sam Epstein, Pam Beddor and Chandra Sripada and I were huddled in Pam's office in Lorch Hall back in early 2010s, working out the details of the first cognitive science major, we never imagined how it would take off. We certainly didn't imagine the revolutionary changes in the field in the last few years It was a tremendous privilege to follow in Sam's footsteps as Director of the Weinberg Institute—Sam was the inaugural Director and put his heart into this place—and I can't believe the good fortune I've had to work with such terrific students, amazing staff, dedicated faculty colleagues, and generous donors over the years (too many to name here!). It has been the highlight of my academic career. The Weinberg Institute truly is a remarkable place, but we're really just getting started! Michigan needs cognitive science more than ever, and our changing world needs our cognitive science graduates. I'm so excited that Dr. Sripada is at the helm now to usher in a new future, bringing both deep experience and fresh ideas.

ALUMNI PROFILES

MADISON KELLY | Class of 2016 | Language

Activities as a student:

I was a horn player in the Michigan Marching Band. I also participated in LSA Student Government. Since my graduation from U of M, I have completed a master's degree in clinical mental health counseling and become a licensed therapist in the state of Washington. Although I did not plan to complete my master's online, completing my degree over zoom in a pandemic is something I am immensely proud of.

Since graduating from U-M:

I quickly passed the national counseling exam and became a licensed and certified mental health provider. I'm passionate about using what I know about the brain and mind to inform and improve the mental health services that I provide my clients.

How has your U-M Cognitive Science degree influenced your career path?

My cognitive science degree has influenced my career path greatly as it introduced me to so many of the academic and behavioral health science topics that I use in my work as a therapist. Through this degree, I began to see the world of cognition as incredibly multidimensional and nuanced. I'm thankful for the foundation I gained in multiple disciplines of cognitive science before launching into my graduate work and professional career.

TYREE COWELL | Class of 2018 | Computation

Activities as a student:

As a student I was heavily involved with the Women's Glee Club and their associated a capella group, Midnight Blue. I also worked part time at Michigan League Catering for all 4 years of undergrad.

Since graduating from U-M:

After graduating, I was able to apply my Computation & Cognition focus to a job as a research associate at Soar Technology, developing AI-based training solutions for DoD customers. After 3 years in that role, I decided I wanted to go back to school and focus more exclusively on education and how people learn. To that end, I very recently graduated from the METALS program (Masters of Educational Technology and Applied Learning Sciences) at Carnegie Mellon University. I am now working as a Learning Engineer at Carnegie Learning, developing new, online products for K-12 math readiness. I am particularly proud of these last few accomplishments as I believe they will enable me to make a real world impact on students' learning across the US

How has your U-M Cognitive Science degree influenced your career path?

My U-M Cognitive Science degree really laid the path for me to be successful in my career. The interdisciplinary nature of the program meant that I was knowledgeable in more than just one sub-discipline of Cognitive Science, which my employers have seen as a huge asset. My honors thesis was also integral in helping me find my first job, as I connected with a representative from Soar Technology while presenting my thesis at the 2018 Cognitive Science Colloquium.

EMMA HEIDEN | Class of 2018 | Decision

Activities as a student:
On campus, I was involved in a co-ed business fraternity called Alpha Kappa Psi, served as a Marketing Peer Coach for the Ross Career Development Office, and held several Teacher's Assistant roles with marketing professors.

Since graduating from U-M:
I started in an account management role at Facebook (now Meta). After spending nearly 3 years as a marketing consultant to Facebook and Instagram advertisers, I wanted to try a startup experience, and transitioned into a program management role at Shopify. At Shopify, I joined a brand new team that focused on building free commerce education products and tools for students and small businesses. Most recently, I've held a marketing manager job at LinkedIn, specifically on LinkedIn Marketing Solutions (the advertising ecosystem).

Career and other highlights that you're most passionate about or proud of:
My current job involves working with many different marketing channels and partners, with the overall goal to promote the power of the LinkedIn platform as a tool for companies to build their brands and reach their consumers. I am proud of using my cognitive science education to inform every role I've taken and every project I complete.

How has your U-M Cognitive Science degree influenced your career path?
I believe that my cognitive science education made me a more empathetic, curious, human driven marketer and colleague. Studying cognitive science alongside my business degree helped me discover why I was (and still am) so fascinated by marketing: all consumers are people! Especially by exploring the decision & cognition track, I was able to draw connections between my cognitive science coursework and my marketing coursework. Ultimately, I've paved my unique career path in the tech industry by building a personal brand as a marketer with cognitive science education.

IBRAHIM HAYDAR | Class of 2023 | Philosophy

Since graduating from U-M:
Since graduating from U-M undergrad, I pursued an MA in philosophy at umich (GSI'ing for COGSCI 200 for 3 of the 4 semesters, with the other semester being a cogsci-related class on artificial intelligence). Now, beginning in the fall, I will be pursuing a PhD in the history and philosophy of science at the University of Pittsburgh where I will be focusing on the philosophy of cognitive science–Pitt's program being one of the very top programs to pursue such interests.
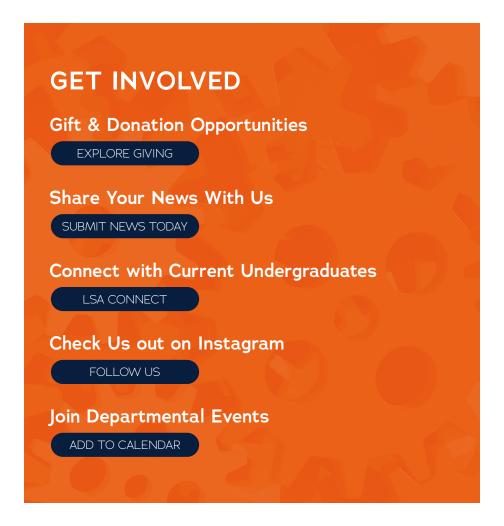
Current Research or Professional Interests:
Foundational and methodological questions across the cognitive sciences–ranging from artificial intelligence to psychiatry.

How has your U-M Cognitive Science degree influenced your career path?
U-M cogsci was where I first encountered the rich and fruitful interdisciplinary nature of cognitive science. A passion for the field led to my current academic trajectory towards studying the foundations and methods of the cognitive sciences.

WEINBERG INSTITUTE FOR COGNITIVE SCIENCE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

The Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science advances the scientific understanding of mind through teaching, research, and interdisciplinary collaboration and the exchange of ideas both inside and outside of the classroom.

The Institute administers an undergraduate major in Cognitive Science (BA or BS degree) and a Graduate Certificate Program in Cognitive Science, sponsors interdisciplinary seminars and speaker series, hosts the annual Marshall M. Weinberg Symposium, and supports a postdoctoral scholar and visiting faculty program.

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