



DRURY  
UNIVERSITY

*The Agruso Challenge for the Behavioral Sciences*



# QUESTIONS

Behavioral scientists ask hard questions such as: How does Alzheimer's disease or a stroke impair cognition? Why is addiction so hard to overcome? Why do some commit predatory or violent acts against strangers or significant others? Why are illicit businesses attractive to some people? Why are access to adequate health care and a clean environment unavailable to many? How can knowledge of decision-making guide technological developments?

As these questions illustrate, behavioral science research is intriguing because it focuses on real-world problems that impact the lives of people around the world. Whether the emphasis is on individuals, group cultures or broader societies, the central issue is discovering how our bodies and environment interact to make our lives better or worse.

Your answer to the Victor M. Agruso III \$500,000 challenge is important because it

will help Drury's behavioral sciences faculty and students investigate such issues.

Agruso gave a lead challenge gift of \$500,000 to establish an endowment for Drury's Department of Behavioral Sciences. The stipulation is for Drury to raise an additional \$500,000 to match the generous Agruso gift within two years.

That \$1 million endowment will transform the behavioral sciences at Drury University.



### **The Legacy of Victor Agruso Jr.**

Agruso's pledge honors the work of his father, longtime department Chair and Professor Victor M. Agruso Jr., who inspired generations of Drury students to dedicate their lives to the behavioral sciences.

At Drury, scientific study of the human experience was encouraged as early as 1888, when the university offered its first class in the field.

The contemporary Department of Behavioral Sciences, which includes criminology, psychology and sociology, offers more than 30 different courses each year. Dr. Agruso, who served as chair until his retirement in 2000, established the department in 1979. He made sure Drury's behavioral sciences students had many opportunities to explore the human condition across disciplines.

As a testament to the visionary nature of his efforts, behavioral sciences is one of two interdisciplinary departments formed at Drury that still exists today, and it is one of the largest on campus.

The Department of Behavioral Sciences is not only a large department. Its faculty and students excel on many fronts. Faculty engage in sound research and consistently receive teaching evaluations that are well above the Drury average. High quality mentoring leads to student success, and students in the behavioral sciences do indeed shine.

About 75 percent of our students elect to attend graduate, law and medical schools, while others find success working in a wide range of human service and business fields.

### **Classroom and Laboratory Improvements**

Students and faculty continue to excel even though they lack access to the latest technologies. Fiscal restraints limit the department's ability to maintain technologically up-to-date labs, and there is not a single "smart" classroom in the building where students receive instruction. The endowment, then, will fund new technologies that will benefit both students and faculty.

### **New Educational Opportunities**

The Agruso endowment will help the department implement a new behavioral neuroscience major. This interdisciplinary field examines dynamic relationships between the brain, other biological processes and human behavior. It is especially attractive to students interested in health-related professions.

Those who want to become physicians and those preparing for careers in clinical psychology, clinical neuropsychology and forensic psychology will become behavioral neuroscience majors. These students will have opportunities to collaborate with faculty in the behavioral sciences and biology to better understand how the brain works and how its functioning directly affects the human condition. With this degree option, behavioral neuroscience majors could also collaborate with Drury computer science professors to build mathematical models of brain activity.

These new technologies will help us lead healthier lives as the 21st century progresses.



*Chase Stallcup, a behavioral sciences student with a dual major in psychology and criminology, demonstrates the use of a Pupillometer to investigate lie detection.*



### Service Learning Opportunities

During their junior or senior year, students in the behavioral sciences are required to enroll in internships that allow them to apply classroom knowledge to their career-specific fields.

More than 40 students are involved in these service learning activities each year, and many work with local and state agencies, including Burrell Behavioral Health, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Cox Medical Centers, the Family Violence Center, Greene County Teen Court, and Victory Mission.

Some students prefer to complete internships in larger cities within the state, such as Kansas City and St. Louis, while others desire out-of-state or even out-of-country internships.

In fact, the number of students who want to engage in service learning outside of Springfield is growing. Behavioral science students are traveling to California, Florida and other states to complete their internships.

For instance, two students interned at Camp Ramapo in upstate New York last summer.

*Drury University student Lauren Cox helped children in Tanzania, Africa, during her internship. She says she learned much from her experience with these children.*

One student, Lauren Cox, decided to travel to Tanzania. Here's what Lauren said about her internship experience:

*Last summer, I completed an internship in Tanzania, Africa. It was the most amazing experience of my life! I was able to work with children in a rehabilitation hospital for six weeks. Because I am planning to be an occupational therapist, this was a great opportunity to see what it would be like and truly help those in need. I was able to start an arts and crafts program, and I assisted with patients, taking them through stretches and physical exercises. By the way, I learned a lot from them too. They taught me Swahili! The children I worked with were from the small villages surrounding Dar Es Salaam. Most lived in mud huts with palm-tree roofs and yet they were some of the most uplifting children I've ever seen. They were so grateful for every day they were given and always optimistic about what their futures may hold. I am so thankful I am a behavioral science major because I know I used every ounce of knowledge the faculty taught me. This was a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and Drury helped make it possible.*

As this reflection reveals, internships are highly rewarding for behavioral science students. The Agruso endowment will provide stipends that will make these types of service learning experiences possible for our students. In this way, the endowment will broaden their horizons with real-world experiences as citizens in our global community.





*Bonni Welch's research revealed that two right side images (far left) merged together are more attractive and healthier looking to people than two left mirror images (far right). The participant's picture in the center is the original image. Bonni is now a first-year medical student at the University of Missouri-Columbia.*

### **The Importance of Student Research**

The Department of Behavioral Sciences is actively involved in helping students learn how science is used to study the human condition and solve problems that hinder people from pursuing healthy, prosperous lives. One avenue for achieving this goal is the Scientific Core, a series of required classes designed to engender scientific literacy.

The Scientific Core is an innovative curriculum endorsed by the National Science Foundation. It culminates in campus-wide presentations of student research. Annually, more than 20 students are invited to present their work at regional, state and national meetings. Given Drury's size, this level of student participation in professional conferences is phenomenal.

Although non-behavioral science majors are not exposed to the Scientific Core, all Drury students acquire knowledge about human behavior through their general studies program. Some of these students choose to conduct research with behavioral sciences faculty through the University Honors Program. One such student was Bonni Welch, who was interested in how facial symmetry and right-brain functioning affect our perceptions of attractiveness and health. *(See the results of her research at left.)*

To help students like Bonni, the endowment will fund materials that will enhance student-faculty research collaborations. Students also want the opportunity to present their research findings at professional meetings, and the endowment will support student conference travel.

### **Community Outreach**

Community outreach, though not required, is integral to education in the behavioral sciences. Some behavioral science students travel out of state to provide hands-on assistance to Native Americans who reside on reservations, while others are involved in post-Katrina clean-up efforts.

Most, however, volunteer locally in a wide range of direct service and research activities. You may find these students volunteering as tutors for elementary school children, as mentors for at-risk youth or as assistants at shelters for battered women and the homeless.

Recently, behavioral science students joined others across campus to help build Springfield's first sustainable Habitat for Humanity home. The house uses sustainable building materials and a geothermal heating and cooling system. It is intended to serve as a model of affordable sustainable housing.

Virtually all behavioral science students serve as community volunteers before they graduate, and many volunteer for more than one project.

Some of the most committed student volunteers want to work with agencies and organizations that provide assistance to people in other countries. The department hopes to sponsor at least one team of international student volunteers annually because it strongly believes that these experiences are congruent with the university's commitment to global perspectives. Your contribution to the endowment will help fund these important behavioral science student experiences.



*Behavioral science volunteers, along with others from the Drury family, work on Springfield's first sustainable house for Habitat for Humanity.*

Your contributions will give our students more insight into how our brains work and add to our knowledge about behavior.

If we are able to give our students rewarding research, community service and internship experiences that only new dollars can bring, we will inspire them to devote their lives to the behavioral sciences, and their insights will benefit all.

From the previous examples, the department *is* giving its students opportunities to conduct research,

participate in community service projects and take part in meaningful internships.

However, to take these student and faculty experiences to the next level, we need your help.

An endowment for Drury's behavioral sciences can mean additional funds for hiring future faculty to enrich the department in other areas.

Therefore, your gift to meet the Agruso challenge will transform the behavioral sciences at Drury. Your gift will enhance our

students' ability to influence the field and add new insights into and understanding of why we behave the way we do.

TO DISCUSS YOUR GIFT OPTIONS,  
PLEASE CONTACT  
DR. KRYSTAL COMPAS  
AT (417) 873-7303  
OR E-MAIL HER AT  
KCOMPAS@DRURY.EDU

*insight*





DRURY  
UNIVERSITY

DEPARTMENT OF BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES  
900 NORTH BENTON AVENUE  
SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI 65802  
WWW.DRURY.EDU/BEHAVIORALSCIENCES  
(417) 873-7303



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