Greetings from the Department of Behavioral Sciences! My colleagues and I work hard to provide interdisciplinary learning opportunities for students so they can think critically about human behavior and are well prepared for graduate work and/or employment. In this issue, we highlight the accomplishments and future plans of some of our majors and also provide our insights on a curious trend in Drury's history. Why do behavioral science faculty always get the “Last Word” in Drury Magazine?

When viewing the photos to the left, which highlight students’ post-baccalaureate plans, you may also notice that Pearsons is sporting a new-and-improved look. Using department-designated donations, the second floor received a fresh coat of paint, new carpet, and new hall furniture, and we used a lot of elbow grease to restore the century-old woodwork. The second floor is beginning to shine, and we extend our thanks to all of you who made this possible!

Our next donor-supported goal is to renovate P216, the primary research space for our scientific core. Completing the advanced behavioral research sequence makes our students strong competitors for scholarships, internships, post-baccalaureate programs, and jobs, and student workstations need to be updated. In May, you will receive an appeal letter by email asking for your support. Thank you, in advance, for helping us to reach our goal.

We also extend our thanks to artist, Tom Beale, whose work is now on display in Pearsons Hall. Beale grew up in Chicago, studied history at the University of Illinois, and after trying his hand at law school, went to California to work for Bobby Kennedy. Tom began painting about 15 years ago.

Reflecting on his Life’s a Beach series, Beale said, “I love to walk in the woods, look out on a field covered with sky, swim in a mountain lake or stream, but an ocean beach with its waves and palms makes me sing about Italy, California, Hawaii, Brazil, Costa Rica, the Caribbean, Samoa, Florida and more. Hopefully my paintings are a picnic for the eyes and the soul, and a reminder to dance on the sand every chance you can.” Beale will have a show of new work in November at Obelisk in Springfield, MO.
DEPARTMENT NEWS

Murray Presents at Midwest Political Science Undergraduate Research Conference

Emily Murray, a junior majoring in Sociology and Political Science, recently presented an impressive and well-received paper entitled “Calling for a sustainable future: The effects of animal agriculture on the environment” at the Midwest Political Science Undergraduate Research Conference in Waverly, Iowa.

Emily’s research focused on destruction to the environment due to the animal industrial complex, including rainforests, soil, groundwater, species extinction, aquatic ecosystems, and the atmosphere. “Having the opportunity to raise awareness about an issue I am passionate about was a special experience.” In addition to environmental concerns, Emily highlighted the suffering animals endure in factory farms. Her presentation generated a lively discussion.

Emily’s decision to research this subject was the result of a discussion in her Animal Ethics class. She “truly felt alarmed” about what she learned when the class addressed the environmental effects of animal agriculture. In fact, Emily had been working on a research paper for Scientific Writing on a completely different topic. “I decided to scrap all of the work I had completed and change my topic to the effects of animal agriculture on the environment. One of the major factors that triggered my passion is that, unlike so many issues, each person can have a lasting, positive impact through simple lifestyle changes. I immediately became a vegetarian to contribute to lowering the demand for animal products.”

In the future, Emily plans to pursue a career in law. Ultimately, she wants to use her career and her passion to help improve the lives of animals.

“Sex and God #blessed” Accepted for Publication

The Advanced Behavioral Research requirement is a tough sequence to complete. Luckily for Rachel Ryan (Photo-Below), Alexa Robinson, and Charles Woods it was a somewhat easier task because of their existing friendship. When the three came together to discuss their research topic, they tried to bring elements together that would be readily testable but also interesting. And that’s how their year-long project over openness, religiosity, and hook up behaviors emerged.

While presenting their work at the MidAmerican Undergraduate Psychology Research Conference in Indiana, their quirky title of “Sex and God #blessed” and their rather taboo topic caught the attention of other researchers, and they were encouraged to submit their paper for publication. They did so and recently learned that their manuscript will be published in the Spring 2016 issue of the Journal of Modern Psychological Studies as the lead article.

After completion of “Sex and God #blessed,” Charles enrolled in an independent research course to investigate a possible association between casual sex, openness, and sexual double standards. After creating an online survey, which was distributed around campus with rapid completion, he presented his findings at the Missouri Undergraduate Psychology Conference in St. Louis, MO. His work also drew the attention of other researchers, and he scored a 2nd place award for best poster presentation.

Charles will attend Radford University to pursue a master’s degree in Experimental Psychology. Rachel will attend Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville to pursue a master’s degree in Clinical Psychology, and Alexa will attend the University of Illinois Springfield to pursue a master’s degree in Marriage and Family Therapy.
In May, I will graduate with a double major in Criminology and Psychology. Without a doubt, the faculty has been vital in opening doors that I never knew were within my grasp. Drury has given me the opportunity to become a published author. Working closely with Dr. Utley, I have a manuscript under review for publication in the Asian Journal of Social Psychology for my research on ethnic and educational biases in a hiring situation. We will receive a decision soon and, by all accounts, it sounds promising.

I was also allowed to facilitate group therapy sessions at a counseling center operated by Thuy Rudy, L.P.C., while interning with the Stone County Drug Court program. This program, under the guidance of Judge Alan Blankenship, provides substance abuse treatment and recovery services to drug-involved, felony repeat offenders as an alternative to incarceration, and it is wildly successful in reducing recidivism.

After graduation, I will attend George Washington University in Washington D.C. to pursue a master's degree in Forensic Psychology, and I hope to intern at the National Center for Analysis of Violent Crime. My long-term goal is to earn a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology in order to provide competency hearings for defendants.

Without the support of my professors, I would never have had the confidence to apply to such a prestigious graduate school, nor would I have had the background to get accepted. Drury has been paramount in my successes, and I have the utmost respect for faculty in the Department of Behavioral Sciences.
Why do Behavioral Scientists Always Get the “Last Word”?

When people see that so many faculty members from the Department of Behavioral Sciences have been asked to contribute the “Last Word” to the Drury Magazine, they often ask, “Does your department always have the last word?” The response to that is really quite simple, “Of course we do.” But the real question is, “Why?” Drs. Jeanie Allen, Trish Morris, Jennifer Silva Brown, and Dave Derossett were happy to provide their insights about why behavioral scientists find themselves in this very special place in Drury’s written history.

Jeanie Allen: “From our study of development, we are masters of theory of mind; thus, we can fully understand other perspectives in such a way that we know what others are thinking before they can open their mouths. We have also witnessed numerous examples of toddler tantrums due to their frustration with being unable to communicate clearly, while also lacking in emotion regulation; therefore, we know how to provide quite a show until we get the last word. But also, because we have spent so much time analyzing behavior, when others are speaking, we can simply fake the Duchenne smile as we state with confidence, “That reflects the ongoing dilemma between genetic and environmental influences.” And we continue saying that until . . . you guessed it, we have the last word.”

Trish Morris: “For me, this quote from C. Wright Mills pretty well sums it up. ‘It is the political task of the social scientist - as of any liberal educator - continually to translate personal troubles into public issues, and public issues into the terms of their human meaning for a variety of individuals. It is his task to display in his work - and, as an educator, in his life as well - this kind of sociological imagination. And it is his purpose to cultivate such habits of mind among the men and women who are publicly exposed to him. To secure these ends is to secure reason and individuality, and to make these the predominant values of a democratic society.’ Now who can top that?”

Jennifer Silva Brown: “Other disciplines may have their superstars, like Beethoven, Einstein, or Twain, but we’ve got Freud, Skinner, Masters and Johnson, and Dr. Phil! We’ve also become famous over the years for employing a plethora of techniques to better understand human behavior, things like trepanation, blood-letting, phrenology, dream analysis, hypnosis, Rorschach tests, subliminal suggestion, Skinner boxes, MMPIs, IQ tests, simulated prisons, electroconvulsive shock therapy, prefrontal lobotomies, and lumbar punctures. On occasion, we’ve even scared children named Albert with little white rats. So basically, when it comes to getting the last word, we bring to the table a pretty extensive skill set.”

Dave Derossett: “What issue covered in Drury Magazine is not somehow a constitution or reflection of human behavior? For my own part, I’m driven by Marx’s urgent call for the ‘ruthless criticism of the existing order, ruthless in that it will shrink neither from its own discoveries, nor from conflict with the powers that be.’ In my estimation, if ‘power is left unexamined in discourse then the insistence that ‘silence is more powerful than having the last word’ primarily serves those speaking in its name. As a cadre, we tend to be irreverent, urgent, insistent, and at least a wee bit righteous in the Behavioral Sciences. You might say having the “Last Word” runs in the family…”