Congratulations 2010 Graduates!

New CMU Psychology Graduates (from L to R) Jonathan Kush, Brittney Krieger, and Mingwei Hsu

Chante Cox-Boyd gave a commencement speech: “All I really need to know I learned in Psychology”

PLB Shoutout—Theresa Kurutz

Theresa Kurutz is the reason behind the success of our undergraduate program, and she successfully manages Ken on a daily basis. Wow. From esteemed professor Anna Fisher, “Theresa saved this semester’s Research Methods poster session! If not for her work, we would be short on easels and out of cookies!” Theresa was honored for her work at the 2010 Dept commencement ceremony (picture left), thanks for all you do Theresa!
In a strange and very secretive selection process, Dept Head Michael Scheier designated me to a 2-year post on the senate. I’m certain that this appointment is punishment for something. But I don’t take this position lightly—I expect everyone to call me Senator Creswell. As I understand it, my job consists of attending a monthly faculty senate meeting where I am to advocate and vote on issues that affect faculty members. One might be wondering, what issues do the faculty have? Well, I have no idea. I attended the first faculty senate meeting this month with Department Co-Senator Charles Kemp, and it was an exciting hour covering the following developments:

* There’s a new faculty senate president

* Lots of hand-waving about faculty senate procedures.

* There was some confusion about voting procedures—do we use a hand vote? Can it be an oral yea or nay vote? My hope is that we’ll have dedicated senate meetings to resolve these issues in the near future.

* All new members learned the secret Faculty Senator handshake and then had to complete the walk of fire (actually, we just raised our hands and identified ourselves)

* Midway through the meeting, I looked over at Senator Kemp and he had generated several theoretical models on a piece of scratch paper. This is evidence that Psychological Review papers can be written in faculty meetings. I will try to collect his theoretical musings for future PLB issues.

* In the most exciting development, the ‘results’ of a campus-wide survey of faculty were unveiled. This survey asked the faculty such important questions like, “do you know who your faculty senator is? Are your interests being met by the faculty senate?...” There was something like a 20% response rate to this survey, and a statistics dept senator raised his hand and said something like, ‘hey, you’re embarrassing my field by presenting this crappy data’. But the data just kept streaming forth, and I had the acute awareness that somewhere in the room someone was listening.

* The next faculty senate meeting will be in the Fall. Charles Kemp and I are your faculty senate reps, so please let us know how we can serve you. The one exception is Eric Thiessen, please don’t ask us to speak on your behalf, we simply can’t push your racist agenda.

Senator Creswell, Psychology Department

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1 In a secret ceremony, Scheier made Creswell drink from a cup of water taken from the magical department water fountain, telling him that it was now his responsibility to protect the department from the smoke monster.
2 Between checking emails
3 As a faculty senator, Thiessen broke senate rules and said something inflammatory about a college memorial. Exact details have not been forthcoming, but basically, Thiessen is a racist.
Erik Thiessen provides clue concerning graduate students' market value

At the Grad Student Appreciation event last month, Erik was kind enough to transcribe the first verse of the "Grad Student Appreciation Song" on an official research napkin.

Ignoring its lazy and inconsistent rhyming scheme, it did provide one solid data point concerning graduate students' value as market commodities.

For your convenience, Grad Talk has produced the chart below which should prove useful when making difficult budgetary decisions.

Clearly, more investigation is required in order to flesh out the gaps in this hierarchy. Needless to say, Grad Talk will follow-up with all future stupid developments for some reason.
Editors’ Note: We here at Grad Talk want you to know that this is a democratic and inclusive news organization. We're not just sitting up here, in our ivory tower, dictating (read: making up) what content should be included in this erudite and exclusive publication. We welcome (read: are willing to beg for) contributions from outside sources. So, here is an article from a name that long-time readers may recognize as co-founder and former editor of Grad Talk!

My Role as Prime Minister of PsyCoke: Life, Responsibilities, and the Pursuit of all things Caffeinated

by Bryan Matlen

Many in the psych department know me as the guy that walks down the hallway who will say hi to you – the socially awkward and generally mild-mannered graduate student. Many fewer people, however, know that I carry one of the most important roles in this department: Prime Minister of PsyCoke.

As Prime Minister of PsyCoke, I am responsible for all operations carried out towards the efficient and everyday functioning of the grad student soda machine. Before you pass this task off as mundane, however, consider some (very official) statistics: About 55% of the psych department is addicted to diet coke, and another 35% are addicted to caffeine. The typical faculty member averages 3.42 trips to the soda machine daily, while Erik Thiessen is an outlier at 7.2. Given that I am the sole person in charge of the largest and easiest access to caffeine on the third floor of Baker Hall, there is little question that my position here is of vital importance to all research productivity coming out of CMU Psychology.

To belabor this point, imagine a world where the grad soda machine suddenly disappeared. Faculty meetings would no longer have diet cokes as refreshment options. Lunches would be spent drinking water! What kind of life would that be?? What kind of research would get done? Life would halt to a standstill, as would our EEG activity, and Ken Kotovsky would develop ticks from caffeine withdrawal – publications would plummet, and I would be the sole reason for blame. If you are getting the impression that I am more important than Mike Scheier is to the functioning of this department, your hunch would be correct.

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Continued from last page

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In some ways, I’m kind of what large national banks are to the U.S. economy: I could really mess everyone up whenever I feel like it.

To put it modestly, my influence as Prime Minister is broad, and my importance is broader. Everyday, I have to make decisions that change lives, and no matter what decision I make I’m bound to displease someone somewhere in Baker Hall. For instance, in a recent survey conducted in the fall of ’09, the once highly touted diet cherry coke fell to 15th most popular soda in departmental polls. After axing this option from the selection menu, however, I very soon found out that, although supporters of diet cherry coke were few, they were also the most devout. Anger and outrage are just a few of the things I deal with on a daily basis as PM.

But with power comes responsibility, and with responsibility come the ability to infuriate people. Such is life as the PM of soda. And so I carry on...

But, here’s something to consider the next time the soda machine is out of your favorite pop: I have power. Power to deprive you of things you hold dear (e.g. diet coke). Did I ask for this power? No. Will I abuse it if necessary? Absolutely. Tyrannical tactics are just one of the privileges I reserve the right to exercise in my role as PM of PsyCoke, so it may be in your best interest to send overly glowing emails when you alert me of the fact that the soda machine didn’t give you the correct change.

While some may consider me a tyrant, and others a dictator, I believe history will see me as a revolutionary. An Entrepreneur with a vision. The Prime Minister who has redefined the way we think about 50-cent soda.

Yours Truly,

THE PM of PsyCoke

Bryan Matlen

Hey Fellow Grads! Here comes your opportunity to be in the PLB!!!

Do you have any fun/interesting/potentially embarassing stories about dealing with undergrads (i.e., running them in studies, TAing their classes, picturing beating them senseless with a copy of the APA manual, etc.)? You should tell us! Send us your stories to gradtalk@gmail.com to have them published in a future Grad Talk issue!

-- Thanks! Alan, Matt, and Colleen
Staff Council (SC) Notes— May, 2010
Notes for meeting held 5/20/10

By Ellen Conser, H&SS Staff Council Rep 2006-2010
conser@andrew.cmu.edu

May 26, 2010

THIS ISSUE:
- Discussion on morale, raises, etc.
- Awareness survey
- Committee reports
- Rep elections
- Thumbs up
- Save the Date

Morale, Raises, etc.
There was an unstructured discussion on the 1% raises, morale, university culture and what (if anything) SC can do to help address the issues or get the word out. Barbara Smith (HR) participated. See the April Notes for details about ’10-’11 raises & supplemental payments to those with salaries <$50K. Ms. Smith and others clarified that it’s a raise pool, meaning some people might get a tad less than 1% whereas others may get trivially more than 1%. The SC Executive committee met prior to our meeting and came up with 3 alternative ideas to address the issues publically: an HR-sponsored Open Forum, a President Cohon Open Forum, or an SC Open Forum. A perennial issue arose again today: In an environment of recent unannounced layoffs, many staff are extremely concerned about & reluctant to offer any negative feedback or criticism about university policy in an open forum in front of their supervisors, coworkers and HR staff. To address this understandable reluctance, reps suggested (instead of or in addition to an Open Forum) an anonymous webpage made secure using Andrew authentication, e.g. so a person couldn’t comment more than once or so unauthorized people couldn’t comment. In regard to raises, I suggested that HR consider offering some sort of calculator on its website, analogous to the well-known online retirement investing calculators offered by Vanguard, TIAA-CREF, etc. Such a site would allow a worker, once they’ve been told how much their healthcare premiums and other benefit costs will rise at Open Enrollment this fall, to simply enter into an online form the dollar amounts for their ~1% raise, supplemental payment, 2011 hikes in monthly healthcare premiums, monthly retirement contributions, and other budget details, and determine for themselves --in monthly, dollar terms-- whether they’ll fall behind, stay level, or move ahead financially in the upcoming year. Such a calculator would also assist in your decisionmaking about whether you’ll need to drop down to a less-comprehensive medical or prescription plan -- or put less in your retirement plan -- to avoid falling behind financially. Ms. Smith observed that retirement-only calculators now available through HR / Benefits websites are little-used. Any feedback & questions on any of these issues may be directed to Ms. Smith at bs2c@andrew.cmu.edu

SC Awareness Survey
Staff Council is conducting a survey (link below) of non-union staff to gauge awareness of its roles and responsibilities to the campus community. It’s only 16 questions long, includes blank spaces for any comments you’d like to share with us, and should take less than 5 minutes to complete. They ask you to complete the survey by Friday, June 4th.

Committee Reports
Kennywood: See attached flier for pricing details. The current ‘retail’ price for Kennywood tickets is $35.99 so the CMU discount is still substantive this year. Discounted Idlewild ($19.99) and Sandcastle ($17) tickets are available from Barb Price, in person, while they last. Her contact info is below. These parks do not offer a CMU staff discount on the season pass pricing.
Renaissance Festival: The Benefits Cmte. reported it’s arranged for CMU community members (not just staff) to get discounts on Renaissance Festival tickets. Students, faculty, and staff can buy adult tickets for $12.95 (a $3 savings) and kids’ tickets for $6 (a $1 savings) through Sept. 17. Tickets can be ordered by fax, mail or online at
http://www.pittsburghrenfest.com/groupdiscount.html. The form is also attached here. Festival dates are Aug. 21 – Sept. 26 (weekends & Labor Day only). Questions: John Lanyon, at jlanyon@.

TODASTW: A total of 160 kids participated in Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day.

FOOD COMMITTEE: Dolores Matthews, Staff Council’s appointee to the Dining Staff Advisory Council (DSAC), is seeking your input about Culinart’s performance so far on campus. Attached are examples of the kind of input they’re in need of, to gauge the current state of dining on campus and whether the new vendor is a good fit. After speaking with her, I know that Dolores would appreciate your feedback at doloresm@ for her to share with DSAC.

Representative Elections
This year is a Divisional election for SC reps: You can only vote for a candidate who works in your own division (e.g., H&SS). I’ve been nominated and I’m up for re-election this year. If you feel you’ve benefited from these newsletters and would like them to continue, I’d appreciate your vote. Voting is between June 11-18 at http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/.

Thumbs Up
A thumbs up to hosts President Cohon and Provost Mark Kamlet for the annual Staff Picnic on May 19. The picnic-style grilled food and desserts, catered by Common Plea this year, were very good and attendees seemed to enjoy themselves. I liked the variety at the vegetarian station, as well as the grilled chicken. The Common Plea staffers were extremely friendly and upbeat. We saw President Cohon attending and interacting with guests.

Save the Date

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SC Awareness survey</td>
<td>Through June 4, 2010</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td><a href="http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PZZYBNNB">http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/PZZYBNNB</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Pathways to Health</td>
<td>June 10</td>
<td>Main campus</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cmu.edu/pathwaysstohcaulth">http://www.cmu.edu/pathwaysstohcaulth</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Council Representative Elections for 2010-2012 term</td>
<td>June 11-18</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td><a href="http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/">http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/</a> Qns: Joe Imbimbo, at joie@andrew or 8-5033</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ticket Sales: Kennywood</td>
<td>June 28–July 8</td>
<td>UC &amp; Mellon Institute</td>
<td>Barb Price at <a href="mailto:bp0a@andrew.cmu.edu">bp0a@andrew.cmu.edu</a> or 8-3688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket Sales: Kennywood, Idlewild, Sandcastle</td>
<td>This summer; While they last</td>
<td>In person from Barb Price</td>
<td>Barb Price at <a href="mailto:bp0a@andrew.cmu.edu">bp0a@andrew.cmu.edu</a> or 8-3688 Her office is at Tepper School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennywood Day</td>
<td>Sat. July 10</td>
<td>Kennywood (dub)</td>
<td>See attached flier for details or contact Barb Price</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pgh Renaissance Festival</td>
<td>8/21-9/26</td>
<td>Near West Newton, PA</td>
<td><a href="http://www.pittsburghrenfest.com/groupdiscount.html">http://www.pittsburghrenfest.com/groupdiscount.html</a> Questions: John Lanyon, jlanyon@</td>
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Attachments:
- May 2010 agenda;
- April 2010 official minutes,
- Kennywood info flier,
- Renaissance Festival flier,
- Dining Committee soliciting feedback handout
The staff had a delicious lunch at Church Brew Works.

Can you name this Psychology Department Professor?

A picture from the May Departmental Happy Hour

Michael Scheier also spoke at the Department Commencement Ceremony. Thanks to Sharon Carver for the graduation photos.