Welcome back!

It’s the beginning of another exciting year in the CMU Department of Psychology. Post-doc David Reitter took the picture above, which is a new sign on campus that helps direct people to our new space next to Wean Hall, and David claims the new space is quite nice.

There’s a lot of news in this issue. Our department continues to shine in so many ways—CMU Psychology was ranked #4 nationally in the most recent NRC graduate program report, John Anderson won the prestigious Franklin Award, and David Plaut served up an ace during disc golf.

What’s on the horizon? The PLB will continue to delight with sneak peaks of our new incoming grad students in this issue. It’s going to be a great year.

Please send pictures, commentaries, anything related to squirrels, and feedback to the PLB Editor, David Creswell (creswell@cmu.edu).

Faculty Foot Fetish?
Can you link faculty publications with their shoes? Play our game and win prizes... Page 3

Meet our New Grads!
Caitlin, Emily and Andrew reveal all! Well, sort of. Check it out. Page 4
Plaut gets it in. Finally.

Any golfer worth their salt will tell you that unless you’re talking about Ken’s boat, a hole-in-one is a rare and beautiful thing. After four years of playing disc golf - basically golf with Frisbees - David Plaut finally became a member of the “Ace” club. And as is Plaut’s style – I use the word carefully when I refer to David - it wasn’t your typical hole-in-one. Plaut, Thiessen, and Rakison were playing at Shenley Park one day this summer and they came to hole 15 only to see a fairly large group of partygoers on the tee. After a little discussion about what the hell the golfers were doing with brightly-colored Frisbees, 3 dogs, and a rugby world cup shirt, Plaut drove his disc up the fairway. Unfortunately, his drive wasn’t the best and it flew about 25 feet off target straight at a tree. But, as luck would have it the disc bounced off the tree straight into the basket you see below (or wherever the editor decides to put it). Any hole in one is an unusual accomplishment – and results in the retirement of the disc - but this ace was truly out of the ordinary. Congratulations to Plaut! Now it’s Thiessen’s turn to stick it in – feel free to encourage him next time you see him in the corridors of Baker Hall.

--Submitted by the dept’s anonymous disc-golf correspondent

Plaut, Thiessen, and Rakison putting at the Scheneley Park Disc Golf course. This is the perfect way to take a break from work, check it out!
Taking sole responsibility

How well do you know your faculty’s shoes? And their journal publications?
Match the shoes with the journal article and send your responses to behrmann@cmu.edu.
Prize for the first correct response sheet (left column shoe number – right column matched publication)

5. Processing of perceptual information is more robust than processing of conceptual information in preschool-age children: Evidence from costs of switching. Cognition. 119, 253-264.
12. Theory, not cultural context, will advance American psychology. American Psychologist. 64, 570-571.
13. Location, location, location: alterations in the functional topography of face- but not object- or place-related cortex in adolescents with autism, Frontiers in Human Neuroscience.
Meet Our New Graduate Students!

The PLB asked our new graduate students a couple of questions, looks like we've got some real ringers.

**Caitlin Tenison** (Advisor: John Anderson)

*Undergrad major and university:* Plan II honors and Psychology at UT, Austin
*Favorite hobbies:* drawing/writing comics, reading fiction, playing violin, and going on adventures.
*What do you think of Pittsburgh?* I have really been enjoying the multitude of activities going on. From the Steel City Games to concerts and movies in the park, it seems like every weekend there is something happening here.
*Do we have free will?* Yes. However few people regularly make the effort to exercise their will. So while it's an option, for the most part people go with the flow.

PLB Editorial Note: drawing and writing comics? Caitlin can be expecting to hear from the PLB...

**Emily Lindsay** (Advisor: David Creswell)

*Undergrad major and university:* Architecture at Miami University
*Favorite hobbies:* yoga, reading, cooking, fine wining and dining, traveling, soaking up the sun, laughing
*What do you think of Pittsburgh?* I love Pittsburgh, particularly the Strip (especially the cheese counter at Penn Mac), the culture (especially the gems & minerals in the Carnegie Museum and the Pittsburgh Pirates), and the food scene. And I'm really glad to be at CMU!
*Do we have free will?* I'm undecided because it's tricky to disentangle the influence of our social environment. I do think we're capable of having free thought and a chosen mindset, which could be considered more important than free will.

PLB Editorial Note: free will... spoken like a true social psychologist...

**Andrew Bauer** (Advisor: Marcel Just)

*Undergrad major and university:* Neuroscience and psychology at Kenyon College
*Favorite hobbies:* video games, weights/running, reading (e.g., sci-fi getting into writing it too), some cooking, and aiming to start racquetball and piano (we'll see)
*What do you think of Pittsburgh?* Inexpensive (so far); hybrid of East Coast and Midwest (interesting/cultured but with friendlier people)
*Do we have free will?* Not as much as we think, if we do at all

PLB Editorial Note: Andrew, please make sure to beat Thiessen in racquetball. Beat him real good. Please take it easy on Kotovsky on the court, he's fragile and delicate.
2011 Graduation
Congratulations to our 2011 graduating class. We are very proud of you! Psychology major Rosanna Breaux seen here with undergraduate program director Ken Kotovsky (and his gold medals).

Departmental Opinion
The PLB polled the department on “hot issue” questions, here are your answers.

FAST FACTS

68% - YES
Does Ken Kotovsky spray tan?

33% - YES
Does Erik Thiessen experience human emotions?

SIBR Technologist Scott Kurdilla attended the Siemens Innovations Conference in San Antonio, Texas. One notable innovation was learning how to drink beer and margarita simultaneously. Scott is offering free trainings to interested folks.
Vicki Helgeson and her family went to the Galapagos Islands! Vicki seen here (picture on right) assessing metabolic control in a giant tortoise.

Update: Bobby Klatzky in Munich

What does one do when taking a sabbatical in Germany? Drink beer, duh. Bobby sent this picture of her new office at the mini-Hofbrauhouse.

Ken seen here with a way more stylish Sasha at Yellowstone National Park (above). The Koedinger-Fisher family also went to Australia, Anna seen below holding a funny looking bunny.
Lori and her husband hiked to the top of an active volcano on Italy’s Stromboli Island. (Aren’t strombolis supposed to be eaten?) At the base of the hike there was a sign indicating appropriate footwear (right). Lori had to change out of her high heels…

Marlene Behrmann and David Plaut spent some time at the beach in Cape May, NJ, and also went to a store (above) called Ammo and Ice Cream in West Virginia. They had their choice of 100 different ice creams, and at least 500 choices of guns. Buy one, get one free?

Drs. Just and Kotovsky and their partners were having dinner on Martha’s Vineyard at Nancy’s Seafood Restaurant when President Barack Obama and his family stopped by for dinner, shook hands with all the patrons, and proceeded to a private party in the restaurant (picture below). Good food, good friends, good times, cute bibs.
Interested in Seeing the Children’s School Flood of ’11?

A note from Sharon Carver: I am so grateful for everyone’s flexibility and welcome when we had to move 16 people into Baker Hall for three weeks! In case you are interested in seeing the video of the flood as it was happening (15 minutes into it) there are two clips posted on the department website (scroll to the bottom and click “Site Map.”) These flood photos (below) were taken after the water had receded (on the day after, 8/20).

Anna Fisher’s (wet) lab.

Yes, that’s standing water in the classroom.

David Rakison’s lab. Flood water level is clearly marked on the boxes!

Our wonderfully talented Children’s School staff, now working in 340A Baker Hall. Please make them feel welcome!
Staff Council (SC) Notes--- June and August, 2011

By Ellen Conser, H&SS Staff Council Rep 2006-2012
coser@andrew.cmu.edu

August 31, 2011

THIS ISSUE:

• June: Light agenda
• Tuition benefit taxation
• New HR Benefits staff
• MS Exchange vs. Oracle Calendar
• Save the Date
• Discounts, offers, other stuff

There was no meeting in July. Most of my notes are about the August meeting; June had an extremely light agenda.

June
Reps took advantage of the light agenda to reflect on Staff Council’s activities over the last year and brainstorm ways to better serve staff and reps, and to better orient incoming reps.

Tuition Benefit Taxation
It was discovered that tuition benefits paid by CMU to external schools should have been taxed at the state and local level, but haven’t been. So the amount of tax withheld from an affected staff person’s paycheck has or will fluctuate, to accommodate for the necessary adjustments. Another change: all checks to outside institutions will now be directly sent to the institution, not the employee.

HR Benefits Leadership Changes
New Benefits Manager Mary Oler and Joyce Heckman (new Asst VP, Benefits & Compensation) came to introduce themselves as benefits liaisons to SC. The imminent, messy divorce between Highmark and UPMC is on their radar, and they will be capable of answering questions about how it will affect us at the Benefits Open Forum (Oct. 25) and Open Enrollment, if not sooner.

MS Exchange as Alternative to Oracle Calendar
MS Exchange is replacing Oracle Calendar in some departments. For now, the decision is being left up to departments as to whether & how this is done.
For info: www.cmu.edu/computing/exchange Questions: Ms. Chris Nolin (cnolin@andrew).

Save the Date
(Staff Council-related & other events of interest to staff)

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Visit and bookmark http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/ for more about Staff Council
**Discounts, Offers, Other Stuff**

Remember that SC-related discounts and many events are always listed on our website (URL appears in the footer below).

**Pittsburgh Renaissance Festival:**

Staff Council has arranged for members of the university community to purchase discounted tickets to the Pittsburgh Renaissance Festival, "Save a King's Ransom," in Mt. Pleasant, Pa., during weekends from Aug. 20 through Sept. 25, including Labor Day. Students, faculty and staff can purchase adult tickets for $13.45 (a $3.50 savings) and children's (ages 5-12) tickets for $7 (a $1 savings). Tickets can be ordered online, through 9/23/11, at [http://www.pittsburghrenfest.com/groupdiscount.html](http://www.pittsburghrenfest.com/groupdiscount.html)

Contact SC Rep John Lanyon at jlanyon@andrew.cmu.edu with questions.

**Weight Watchers @ Work:**

New session starts Sept. 7. Contact Rita Motor ([rita@cmu.edu](mailto:rita@cmu.edu)) or go to [http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rita/wwmtngs.html](http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/rita/wwmtngs.html) for all details. Please try to let Rita know by Fri. Sept. 2 if you want to sign up.

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**Attachments:**

- June 2011 minutes
- August 2011 minutes
Dr. Learnasaurus Stolen by Faculty, Graduate Students Retaliate

Dr. Learnasaurus, the beloved grad student mascot\(^1\), mysteriously disappeared several months ago from the rafters of the Grad Wing.

Despite the motherload of “Have you seen the lost dino” posters punctuating every foot of Baker Hall, nobody was willing to profess their guilt.

Unfortunately for the faculty (and many others), the Surprise Flood of 2011 destroyed the Children’s School and infant labs. While the grads were digging around the basement of Margaret Morrison hoping to find an 18th century pirate ship\(^2\), they instead discovered the following photos on David Rakison’s computer...

\(^1\) Dr. L was spontaneously birthed in response to the grad students’ discovery last February that people exist who don’t believe dinosaurs exist

\(^2\) See also:
Evidently, upon finally discovering that they all have keys to the grad wing, the faculty thought it would be cool to steal Learnasaurus and use him for companionship on their various summer adventures...
But little did they know...

As with any kind of dinosaur, Learnasaurus’s DNA had been preserved in the bellies of mosquitos suspended in amber.

Because CMU Psychology only recruits the most clever and industrial graduate students, it did not take long for them to track down said mosquitos\(^3\).

Teaming up with genetic experts from the biology department, the grads were not only able to revive Dr. Learnasaurus...

\(^3\) Found on Flagstaff Hill.
...but also clone him! And genetically engineer his genes to make velociraptors.

Apparently, the same master key that opens the grad wing also opens Erik Thiessen’s office.

KARMA!

But what will the faculty do next? The saga continues...
A grad student’s summer trip of hiking through the Smoky Mountains is interrupted by an apparition of her advisor. It reportedly told her that fun time was over.

Later the apparition came back in its more intimidating human form to tell her that her literature review would not write itself. She quickly returned to Pittsburgh.

“You can pick your friends, and you can pick your nose, but you can’t pick your friend’s nose. Unless they are in the Cold Study, then you can weight their mucus.”

-Ancient Chinese Proverb
Graduates students do not have to be that smart. I am a testament to that. Through out the year I will share with you my most memorable moments of stupidity. Here are a few brief examples of what is in store:

- When I first moved to Pittsburgh, I thought Kennywood was like Dollywood, except for Kenny Rogers.

- During the early 90’s Seattle grunge explosion, a friend of mine asked me if I liked Pearl Jam. I replied “I don’t know, I never had it. What do you put it on?”

- After reading a list of my advisor’s publications, I wondered how one who go about measuring the religious leanings of primates. Later, after much reflection, I realized that the article was about agonistic monkeys, not agnostic ones.

(Kenny as I like to remember him)

Does this sexy monkey believe in God? We may never know.