Understandably, Dept Head Michael Scheier has been under a lot of pressure the last couple of months. He’s had to manage an unruly and opinionated faculty, help identify world-leading scholars to serve as advisory board members, and plan the two-day Advisory Board meeting (October 21-22). How has Scheier handled the pressure? Pretty well. But one significant change has many people in the department clucking. Scheier has reconvened a new board to support his research agenda. Much like re-districting in the political world, Scheier has now repopulated our advisory board with personality psychologists—scholars who study topics such as optimism, positive illusions, and implicit egotism. When Scheier was asked about this surprise maneuver, all he could say was “we need to send a more optimistic research message.”
In the last issue of the PLB there was a comment in the Grad Talk that one of the department’s David’s was described as an attractive feature. I can’t know that this comment was directed at me, but given the unappealing physical and mental nature the other three Davids I assume that it was. Of course, I would like to be considered an “attractive feature” because I’m great to have as an advisor or committee member, because of my insightful comments during talks, or because I’m just plain fun to have around. But my reading of this comment was that I am being objectified as a sexual object – again – and I think that it’s time to deal with this issue head on. After long nights of deliberation, I have decided that it can only be my fanny pack that is driving this effect. Of course, it’s an accessory that only real men can wear. Lesser men shy away from the “executive crotch bag” and instead go for tried-and-trusted classics like nice shoes, blazers, and gold medallions. Of course, the other David already have their own special abilities: Creswell has blond locks that go on forever, Rakison has a fake British accent, and Klahr has the “beard of power”. But the mystery of what sits inside my faux-leather abdominal carrying case is something that has always captured the attention. If only the other Davids knew about its power they might start wearing one too. Until then, however, I will be the department’s fanny-pack torch-bearer. It’s a big job for just one man but I’m the right David for the job. And after all, it can only be a good thing for the department if my little stomach purse can help to bring more graduate students to our department.

- David
Bobby Klatzky and Marlene Behrmann are featured on the Go Cognitive! website (check them out at www.gocognitive.net). Yes, the website accepts donations.

Post-doc Darryl Schneider and his bowling team ‘Strike Force’ won the summer championship at Forward Lanes in Squirrel Hill!

CAPTION CONTEST! We invite your captions for this never-before-published Klahr picture. We will publish them in the next issue!
Thanks to everyone who attended the Annual Psychology Department Meeting and Gathering on Monday September, 27!

**Department Head Guilty of Serious Omission!**

Michael Scheier, Psychology Department Head, reported to the Department in last month’s open department meeting and party that one of the social faculty, S. Cohen, had been named one of the 20 most influential social psychologists in the world. What Dr. Scheier left out, was that Cohen was not the only member of our department on this list. SCHEIER himself was also included! Congratulations to the department head who also seems to be able to maintain a major scholarly presence. We want no further omissions in future reports of department status!
Good news, there was some real excitement in the Faculty Senate meeting on October 5. Well, maybe that’s stretching it, but the presentations kept the two of us (Senator Kemp and myself) engaged and attentive. Here are the highlights of the meeting:

- **The Dean of Student Affairs** spoke about the services student affairs provides to students. The basic tagline she used was, “we want students to be the architects of their education.” Imagine that, architects! I thought I’d highlight three programs that you should know about:
  - The Career and Development Center (www.cmu.edu/career) is going through many improvements and offers improved career counseling and job placement services.
  - Counseling & Psychological Services (CAPS) (www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/counseling) offers crisis services and psychiatric assessment.
  - The Office of International Education (www.studentaffairs.cmu.edu/oie) offers help and advising to international students, as well as advising on study abroad programs.

- **Last month we were told to expect an exciting presentation on the carrying capacity of the university by Mark.** I took this to mean that Mark Kamlet would talk about our increasing university student enrollment. But no, I got all hot and bothered over the wrong Mark! Instead, Faculty Senator Mark Stehlik from Computer Science gave a fire and brimstone talk on the many challenges increasing enrollments create across the university. For example, we have seen a linear increase each year over the last 5 years in the numbers of undergrads enrolling—in 2010 we had 1,500 in our first year class! What’s interesting is that the university has set a target of 1,360 students. Mark ended his talk with a question, if we believe our carrying capacity is 1,360 students, why are we exceeding it? So, there are no answers right now. What’s more, Mark asked Mark Kamlet this question over the summer, and Kamlet’s answer? “Well, it’s a valid concern, you have my blessing to go figure out why.”

- **John Papinchak,** university registrar, talked about the 2011-2012 academic calendar. There are two possible Fall 2011 calendars that are being explored. The first is a start date of August 22 with classes ending December 2nd (final grades are due Dec 15th). The second is a start date of August 29 with classes ending December 9th (final grades due December 22). This was a hotly debated issue—do we want to spoil our summers by starting a week early (with option 1). Or do we want to spoil our holiday break by ending a week later (option 2). Lots of valid points were presented on both sides—on the one hand, starting earlier presents challenges for child care, summer travel and research productivity. Ending later presents challenges for holiday travel (particularly for international students and those who have final exams and grading closer to Dec 22). Suddenly, the faculty czar suggested that we take an unofficial senate vote to see where the senate stands on the two proposed calendars. Senator Kemp and I looked at each other with a mix of excitement, fear and trepidation! Did we have an opinion? What would our psychology constituents want us to do? Well, we fired from the gut and voted for option 2 (starting August 29th). The senate vote was pretty evenly split- 16 were in favor of option 2 and 11 were in favor of option 1 (4 senators abstained). Senator Kemp and I are now conducting an official poll among the psychology faculty to see where folks stand on the issue. You can also submit your comments to the PLB!

Well, that’s all folks. The next faculty senate meeting will be held on November 2nd at 4:30pm.

Senator Creswell
David Rakison’s research has been creating quite a stir among various media outlets. Most recently, Rakison spent a day in late September filming a Discovery Channel segment on infant’s perceptions of snakes and spiders. What made the segment particularly exciting and educational was when Rakison actually brought out his snake for the cameras, saying that his snake often scares young children in his research studies. As you might imagine, initially everyone was quite nervous around such a large snake, but one could quickly see that Rakison was a very good snake handler. What’s his secret? David said it was quite simple… he handles his snake gently and plays with it often.

No doubt, we’ll be seeing more film crews in the Rakison Lab in the coming years. The PLB will track all of these intimate developments, as they no doubt provide important insights into human cognitive development and common folk wisdom that “size matters.”
Staff Council (SC) Notes--- From Sept 16, 2010 meeting

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

Oct. 18, 2010

THIS ISSUE:
- HR Benefits presentation
- Focus Groups
- Walking Club
- PAT and parking concerns
- No more Ice Cream Social

Benefits Presentation (what to expect in 2011)
Barbara Smith of HR & colleagues spoke about what to expect for benefits changes for 2011. Price hike information was not made available. Some health plans will be consolidated or (Keystone BCBS HMO plan) eliminated. There'll be 1 HMO remaining after the changes (Health America). For the few who opt for Enhanced long term disability coverage, pricing will now be tied to salary, so as not to violate federal law. The contract with Ceridian to provide flexible spending account services won't be renewed due to many snafus & complaints. Children up to age 26 will be eligible for health coverage (but not dental, etc.) due to passage of ObamaCare. Reminder that funds in your FSA don’t roll over to 2011 unless you actively sign up every year. Postcards will be in home mailboxes soon directing you to HR's website for all enrollment materials.

Focus Groups: Beta Testing
On Sept 29 and Oct 5, SC reps from Computing Services division held tryout focus groups to better communicate with staff & get staff input on perceived problems at CMU. Interest in signing up was reported to be poor as of mid-September. Reps not from the division hosting the group weren’t allowed to sit in, so I have no further information until they report back to us about how it went. For the future, focus groups are meant to be an optional tool for use by reps who need help communicating with or soliciting feedback from staff in their divisions.

Walking Club
Going on this fall. Needs both members & lead walkers. If interested contact Adam Rauf, arauuf@ or John Lanyon, jlanyon@. Walks start in front of Hamburg Hall at noon.

PAT & Parking
There was discussion about Port Authority cutbacks & threatened cutbacks, and poor service experienced by reps and staff in getting to work because of them, as well as overall bus unpredictability & lateness even prior to the current fiscal problems. Buses are jam-packed prior to arrival at CMU after stopping at Pitt, overall unreliability of the service, etc. For parking, some shared stories of enrollment snafus, at times due to staff’s email addresses not being recognized in the system and things like that. Rep Susan Cribbs discussed the issue of pedestrian safety, and pedestrians/bicyclists not following the rules of the road or crosswalks.

Ice Cream Social nixed
The Ice Cream Social of fall semesters past is no more. SC officers decided that costs too much & it wasn’t fulfilling its purpose of getting to know reps better. Rather, many people attended to get free ice cream, then left. Possible alternative in future is coffee & cookies.

(continued next page)
### Save the Date

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Contact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andy Awards</td>
<td>Weds Oct 20, noon</td>
<td>UC McGonny</td>
<td>To volunteer (ushers etc): Kayse Palko, kpalko@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Council Meeting</td>
<td>Thur Oct 21, noon</td>
<td>UC McGonny</td>
<td>This meeting will be mainly about the Food Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Open Forum / Q&amp;A</td>
<td>Tues. Oct 26 noon to 1</td>
<td>UC Ranges 1</td>
<td>Open Q&amp;A forum to ask questions about changes in healthcare &amp; other benefits for next year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits Open Enrollment period</td>
<td>Oct. 25 thru Nov. 23</td>
<td>Online</td>
<td>HR has mailed a postcard to homes. ALL info &amp; enrollment is online: <a href="http://www.cmu.edu/hr/benefits/index.html">http://www.cmu.edu/hr/benefits/index.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Forum with President Cohen</td>
<td>Tues Nov 2 at noon</td>
<td>UC Ranges 1</td>
<td>Qns: contact Bruce Gerson, bg02@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Council Food Drive</td>
<td>First 2 weeks in November</td>
<td>Various locations on campus</td>
<td>Needs volunteers. Contact Carole Panno at ep1g@</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Fitness Fair (Also: One Day, One Can event by Food Drive Committee)</td>
<td>Wed. Nov. 3 from 11-4</td>
<td>UC Ranges 1</td>
<td>Healthcare insurance vendors, other vendors providing benefits to staff, will answer qns about plans, and there are always plenty of freebies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Take your Daughter or Son to Work Day (TODSW)</td>
<td>Thurs April 28, 2011</td>
<td>All over campus</td>
<td>Seeking programming ideas now. Contact Ken Chu at KCHUI@ if you’d like to offer a program or track. Theme in ‘11 is INVENTING THE FUTURE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

### Staff Council Meeting Locations – 2010-11 –All welcome; Only reps can vote

(Dates and Locations are subject to change)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Body</th>
<th>Third Thursday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oct 21</td>
<td>McConomy Auditorium, UC / Meeting mainly about the Food Drive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 18</td>
<td>Ranges 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec 16</td>
<td>McConomy Auditorium, UC (may change to GHC 4307)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan 20</td>
<td>Ranges 3, UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb 17</td>
<td>Ranges 3, UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>Ranges 3, UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 21</td>
<td>Ranges 3, UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 19</td>
<td>Ranges 3, UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 16</td>
<td>Ranges 3, UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul 21</td>
<td>Conner Room, UC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Attachments:**

- Official August 2010 minutes
- September agenda
- Unofficial September minutes
- Flier: Open Forum with President Cohen
- Flier: Benefits Forum

Visit and bookmark [http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/](http://www.cmu.edu/staff-council/) for more about Staff Council
PLB: What's Anna Fisher like as an advisor?
KG: Anna is a great advisor. She is adept at simultaneously providing support and challenging me to foster my professional development. In addition to our common academic interests, we share a deep love for chocolate. The most surprising thing I have discovered about Anna so far is that she is not a huge fan of Girl Scout cookies...Shocking!

PLB: Tell us a little about yourself. Where are you from? Why did you come to CMU?
KG: I am a Colorado native, born and raised right outside of Boulder. My entire family including my 4 sisters, 1 brother, 2 nieces, and nephew all live in Colorado. The past 14 months have been an exciting time for me as I married my adoring husband, Jon, in January, and we moved to our new home in Regent Square this summer. I became interested in the intersect between children's development and their readiness to learn while earning my masters from Harvard in human development and psychology. Although I initially considered going into clinical/school psychology, I found that I really missed doing research! As both an undergraduate and master's student, I conducted research on language acquisition and categorization. Consequently, I decided to apply to CMU as my research interests are closely aligned with Anna’s. Being a part of the Psychology department and PIER allows me a great deal of flexibility to pursue both basic and applied research.

PLB: What do you study in your research?
KG: My primary research interests include attention, language acquisition, and categorization. Currently, I am investigating the relationship between children’s ability to effectively regulate their attention in classroom environments and children’s learning outcomes. I am particularly interested in the role of the physical environment on children’s distractibility. I am also examining how early word learning impacts children’s understanding of categories and subsequently their ability to reason about category membership.

PLB: What types of things do you and Jon do in your free time?
In my free time Jon and I try to get outdoors as much as possible. We like to go hiking, camping, and snow shoeing. I love watching bull riding, so we try and get to PBR events and rodeos regularly. I also like going to the theater and fine art museums.

The PLB is pretty certain this is a picture of Karrie with her husband, Jon.
Grad Talk has recently learned of a radical new research plan put forth by the department head. Motivated by the recent decline in the department’s standing in the U.S. News and World Report rankings, by the desire to bring in more grant money, and by a few beers at happy hour, Dr. Scheier has proposed mandatory collaborations among faculty members within the department. According to Dr. Scheier, this will be “a breath of fresh air” for the research that is currently being produced. Within the next two years, every faculty member will be required to begin a joint research project with one other faculty member in the department. Since Dr. Scheier has made his announcement, the hallways have been buzzing with faculty scrambling to find collaboration partners. Many were concerned about being picked last or not being picked at all (the department does have an odd number of core faculty members). Some have resorted to bribes to secure a collaboration partner – not surprisingly Ken Kotovsky has been seen offering a box of Cuban cigars to anyone who is willing to collaborate with him. We were able to get our hands on some of the preliminary abstracts submitted by the faculty members lucky enough to have secured a research partner.

David Klahr and Mike Scheier

Scheier has previously explored the consequences of giving up on unattainable goals. This line of research will be extended to the context of children learning the Control of Variable Strategy (CVS). From previous studies it appears that every classroom has one child who just cannot learn CVS and will always manipulate two variables when setting up an experiment. Quite often, the parents of this child will hold out hope that the child will master CVS with more training. The present study will explore whether it is beneficial for these parents to accept that CVS is an unattainable goal and the child will never achieve the scientific prowess of this study’s principal investigators.

David Rakison and Jim Staszewski

Rakison has recently shown that female infants can rapidly learn associations between fearful facial expressions and threatening stimuli like snakes and spiders. This research will be expanded upon to include another type of fearful stimulus: land mines. The experiment is designed to determine if infants can learn associations between fearful faces and land mines and if they begin to mimic these fearful facial expressions while viewing land mines. This research will have important implications for the development of a new mine detection system based on the use of human infants.
Ken Kotovsky and Mike Tarr

Over time, individuals who face frequent squirrel home invasions can become squirrel recognition experts, being able to identify repeat offenders and new squirrels. This research will examine if squirrel experts show FFA activation when viewing pictures of various squirrels taken around Pittsburgh*.

*Grad Talk has heard rumors that Kotovsky and Tarr have had difficulty initiating this project because they seem to be unable to find any squirrel experts other than Kotovsky himself. In addition to this, this project has yet to be approved by Dr. Scheier because it is unclear whether it will raise or lower our U.S. News ranking.

Brooke Feeney and Marcel Just

Individuals in romantic relationships often face the challenge of figuring out what their partner is thinking. Failure to identify these thoughts correctly often leads to resentment. In this study we will use fMRI scans to help individuals identify the nouns that their partner is thinking about in an effort to reduce relationship conflict. Nouns used in the study will be related to frequent conflict topics (e.g. cleaning, marriage, mother-in-law). This study will be the first step in pioneering fMRI technology for at-home use, so that an individual can simply scan his or her partner to determine what that person is thinking, eliminating unnecessary guesswork and conflicts.

Graduate Student and Former Grad Talk Editor Looking For New Career?

Sources report that graduate student and former Grad Talk editor Bryan Matlen may be setting his sights on other career opportunities. Specifically: the Renaissance Fair.

During the graduate student trip to the Renaissance Fair last month, it was reported that Mr. Matlen seemed to enjoy himself a little too much, showing interest in everything from giant flasks to the archery range to booth wenches. We at the Grad Talk are not saying this is the verified truth of course, but there has been speculation that our for-now fellow graduate student may have been scoping out the territory and setting up job interviews for the next season. And we have to say, the photographic evidence provided by Ran Liu seems pretty conclusive to us.

Continued...
As soon as the group entered the Fair, Bryan immediately began getting friendly with the Ren Fair natives: perhaps getting his name out there for his future big move.

Mr. Matlen then began sampling the wares, experiencing all the perks of Renaissance Fair life.

Look at how natural he is as he chomps into native Renaissance Fair food. We don’t want to read too much into it, but it sure seems as though he’s had practice!
He then shows off his archery skills at the range, probably to try and catch the eye of the Renaissance Fair people and snag himself a job.

He was also spotted chatting up a pirate performer. A secret affair, maybe? Intrigue upon intrigue!

Now, just to be clear, we at Grad Talk are not saying that these allegations are actually true. But, isn’t it interesting that he has not come forward to deny these allegations yet? Sounds suspicious to us!