



Letter from the chair

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Spring 2025 semester has come with escalating challenges to academic freedom and civil rights—efforts that threaten the foundations of open inquiry, inclusion, and the pursuit of knowledge that define Berkeley, just like other institutions of higher education. These pressures continue to demand our vigilance, resilience, and collective commitment to the core values of our discipline and our university.

Yet despite these external pressures, there is much to celebrate within our department. I am pleased to share a series of exciting updates and accomplishments from this past semester that continue to affirm our community's excellence, innovation, and impact.

Highlights from Spring 2025

Our graduate program in Psychology was ranked **#1** again in the 2025 *U.S. News & World Report* Rankings — a testament to the remarkable strength of our faculty, students, staff, and alumni.

We wrapped up another successful Big Give campaign in March! This year, our funding priority was the **Research Experiences Pathways (REP) Program**, which has been expanding access to research opportunities for students from historically underrepresented communities since its launch three years ago. Thanks to the generosity of three Psychology alumni who together pledged to match every dollar up to \$15,000—and the enthusiastic support of many other donors—we raised \$30,000 to help broaden undergraduate research opportunities.

At the same time, Professors Emeriti **Rhona and Harvey Weinstein** made a generous gift to establish the **Rhona S. Weinstein Award**, which will support Psychology graduate students conducting research on advancing equal opportunity — a powerful investment in the future of equity-focused scholarship. Our thanks go out to Rhona and Harvey!

Our Lectureship Committee chaired by Qing Zhou hosted two distinguished colloquia in the Spring: one by **John Jonides** (University of Michigan) who delivered the **Tryon Lecture** on distractibility and cognitive control, and the other by **Laura Elenbaas** (Purdue University) who delivered the **Equity & Inclusion Lecture** on children's critical thinking about social inequality.

The first in-person gathering of our emeriti faculty since the onset of COVID took place in late April at BWW. This lunch brought together **Rhona Weinstein, Erv Hafter, Shelly Zedeck, Charlen Nemeth, Chris Maslach, Dan Slobin, Irv Zucker, Bob Knight, and Carolyn and Phil Cowan** (see photo on right). Phil Cowan, who organized the lunch, shared that *"The 10 emeriti who attended a lunch funded by the department shared a profound and moving catch-up of the medical events, family changes, and new projects we were involved in... There was a unanimous and enthusiastic plan for another meeting."*

Student News & Updates

We are preparing to celebrate the graduation of 18 Ph.D. students this May and August — the second consecutive year with such a large graduating cohort. While we are saddened to see them leave, we are proud of all they have achieved and excited for their bright futures. Meanwhile, our next generation of scholars is taking shape: from 820 applicants, we admitted 20 and 11 outstanding students accepted our



Left to Right: Rhona Weinstein, Erv Zucker, Shelly Zedeck, Charlan Nemeth, Chris Maslach, Dan Slobin, Irv Zucker, Bob Knight, Carolyn Cowan, Phil Cowan.

offers. We are eager to welcome them to Berkeley this fall. We were able to offer 20 semesters of fellowships to our incoming class.



Our annual **Poster Day** took place on May 7th where our Honor's students showcased their undergraduate theses, and our second-year cohort of Ph.D. students presented their 2nd year projects (see photo on left).

We are also proud to recognize the exceptional contributions of our graduate student instructors. This year's recipients of the Outstanding Graduate Instructor Award—**Rosalinda Nava**, **Maria Luciani**, **Kylie Cassutt**, **Jefferson Ortega**, and **Conrado Eiroa Solans**—have demonstrated extraordinary dedication to teaching and mentorship. Their commitment to fostering thoughtful, inclusive, and engaging learning environments reflects the very best of our department's values and mission.

Faculty News & Updates

We are also thrilled to announce the successful recruitment of **Marina Dubova**, who will join our Cognition Area as an Assistant Professor in July 2026. We look forward to welcoming her and the energy she will bring to our intellectual community.

Our faculty continue to receive distinguished honors in recognition of their excellence in research, mentoring, and service. In the area of scholarship, **Alison Gopnik** was elected to the National Academy of Sciences and received the 2025 Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association. **Fei Xu** was named a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (2025), **Aaron Fisher** was named a Fellow of the Association for Psychological Science (2025), and **Arianne Eason** was awarded a Russell Sage Foundation Fellowship for 2025–2026—each honored for their outstanding research contributions and scholarly impact.

In the area of mentoring and training, **Dacher Keltner** received the 2025 Mentor Award from the Association for Psychological Science, and **Serena Chen** was honored with UC Berkeley's 2025 Carol D. Soc Distinguished Graduate Student Mentoring Award, both recognizing their exemplary support and guidance of graduate students. **Nancy Liu**, Director of the Psychology Clinic, received the 2025 Training Innovation Award from the Association of Psychology Training Clinics for her pioneering contributions to clinical training and supervision.

Finally, **Rudy Mendoza-Denton** was awarded UC Berkeley's 2025 Leon A. Henkin Citation for Distinguished Service in recognition of his enduring commitment to campus equity and community engagement. These accomplishments exemplify the exceptional dedication, leadership, and impact of our faculty across all areas of academic and professional life.

As we move into the summer months, I hope everyone will find time for rest, renewal, and joyful discovery. Thank you for your continued dedication to the Psychology Department and to the principles we hold dear.

Wishes for the Summer

As we move into the summer months, I hope everyone will find time for rest, renewal, and joyful discovery. Thank you for your continued dedication to the Psychology Department and to the principles we hold dear.

Wishing all BEARS a wonderful, and restorative summer!

Ozlem Ayduk
Professor and Chair

Give to Psychology, [HERE](#)

Also please send us your stories and life updates — we feature alumni stories on our website and would love to hear from you!

And keep in touch with us via [Twitter \(X\)](#), and our [Department website](#).



Honors and Awards

FACULTY

Aaron Fisher, Associate Professor of Psychology, has been selected as a fellow to the [Association for Psychological Science](#). Fellow status is awarded to APS members who have made sustained outstanding contributions to the science of psychology in the areas of research, teaching, service, and/or application.

Rudy Mendoza-Denton, Professor of Psychology, has been awarded the the [2025 Leon A. Henkin Citation for Distinguished Service](#). This recognition is given annually to honor a faculty member whose career has been marked by a sustained effort to increase the academic success of students from groups traditionally underrepresented in academic disciplines.

Serena Chen, Professor of Psychology, has been selected as this year's recipient of the [Carol D. Soc Distinguished Graduate Student Mentoring Award for Late Career Faculty](#). This campus-wide award recognizes faculty for outstanding mentorship of graduate students at UC Berkeley.

Qing Zhou, Professor of Psychology, has been selected as this year's recipient of the [Outstanding Contribution to Research Award](#) from the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) Asian Caucus. This award recognizes a scholar who has made outstanding and unique contributions to research on Asian/Asian American families and children.

Alison Gopnik, Distinguished Professor of Psychology and the Graduate School, has been elected to the [National Academy of Sciences](#). The NAS recognizes achievement in science by election to membership and provides science, engineering, and health policy advice to the federal government and other organizations.

Fei Xu, Professor of Psychology, has been elected as a 2024 fellow to the [American Association for the Advancement of Science \(AAAS\)](#) within the psychology section. Election as a Fellow honors members whose efforts on behalf of the advancement of science or its applications in service to society have distinguished them among their peers and colleagues.

Jasmin Brooks Stephens, incoming Assistant Professor of Psychology, has been named in the [Forbes 30 Under 30 list in healthcare](#), which recognizes and celebrates 30 notable people under 30 years old in various industries.

Nancy Liu, Director of our Psychology Clinic, has been awarded the [APTC Training Innovation Award](#). This award honors clinic directors who have implemented a meaningful innovation that positively impacted the training, research and/or service provision being done in their clinic.

Arianne Eason, Assistant Professor of Psychology, was awarded the [Russell Sage Foundation Fellowship \(RSF\) for 2025–2026](#). RSF fellows will pursue research and writing projects that reflect the foundation's commitment to strengthening the social sciences and conducting research "for the improvement of social and living conditions in the United States.

Hedy Kober, Professor of Psychology, has been elected as a member of the [American College of Neuropsychopharmacology](#) (ACNP). The ACNP is a non-profit, professional society dedicated to advancing the scientific understanding of and facilitating communication about disorders of the brain and behavior in order to advance their prevention and treatment.

Graduate Students

Nick Nguyen, Clinical PhD student, has received the [Greater Good Science Center Graduate Research Fellowship](#) to design novel infographics to improve mental health literacy and reduce mental health stigma.

Xinyi Chen, Developmental PhD student, has received the [Graduate Division's Mentored Research Award](#) in 2025. The award assists diverse doctoral students in acquiring sophisticated research skills by working under faculty mentorship on their own pre-dissertation research.

Rosalinda Nava, Maria Luciani, Kylie Cassutt, Jefferson Ortega, and Conrado Eiroa Solans have all been awarded the [Outstanding Graduate Instructor Award](#). This award honors UC Berkeley Graduate Student Instructors each year for their outstanding work in teaching on the Berkeley campus.

Erika Roach, Clinical PhD student, was named an [NIH Fogarty UC Global Health Institute Fellow](#). The fellowship will support her research in Thailand, informing the digital adaptation of parenting intervention to reduce parenting stress and promote mental health in Thai parents and children. She also received the [SSCP Outstanding Student Clinician Award](#), which recognizes outstanding graduate students providing exceptional contributions to the field of clinical psychology through their clinical work.

Publications

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES

Neighborhoods Shape Parenting in Chinese Immigrant Families

How do the places that we call home shape the way we raise our children? In a recent study, **Xinyi Chen, Stephanie L. Haft, PhD, and Qing Zhou, PhD**, explored how neighborhood risks (like poverty or crime) and strengths (like community support) influence parenting styles in 239 Chinese American immigrant families in the San Francisco Bay Area. They found that when parents perceived strong community ties and mutual support, they were more likely to engage in warm, supportive parenting. Conversely, higher crime rates were linked to more controlling parenting. Their work highlights that community conditions, both challenging and supportive, significantly shape parenting styles, and suggests that building stronger neighborhood ties may promote healthier parent-child relationships in immigrant families.



Journal of Family Psychology

The neuroanatomy of Broca's aphasia

Broca's aphasia is a language disorder that impairs the ability to produce fluent speech. It has been historically associated with damage to "Broca's area" in the left inferior frontal gyrus, but newer research challenges this long-standing view. In a recent study, **Alexis Pracar, Nicoletta Biondo, PhD, Nina Dronkers, PhD, and Maria Ivanova, PhD**, examined brain lesions in 39 stroke survivors with chronic Broca's aphasia and compared them to 41 individuals who recovered language function. Surprisingly, they found that damage to the left insula, a region of the cerebral cortex located deep within the lateral sulcus, was far more consistently associated with Broca's aphasia than damage to Broca's area itself. These findings reveal that Broca's aphasia arises from widespread network damage—not just isolated cortical injury—offering a more comprehensive understanding of language loss after stroke.



Frontiers in Language Sciences

Want to keep up with our students?

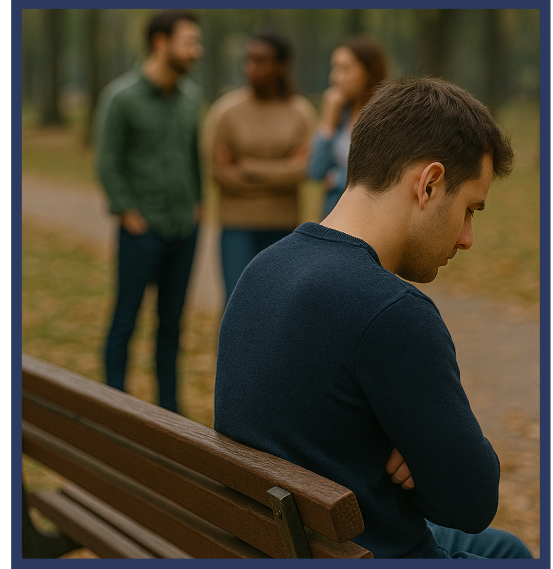
Be sure to [follow us on Twitter!](#)

Publications

RESEARCH DISCOVERIES

Social exclusion triggers withdrawal in schizophrenia

While public attitudes toward many stigmatized groups have improved in recent years, the same has not been true for people living with schizophrenia, leaving them at heightened risk for social exclusion. In this study, recent UC Berkeley Psych graduate **Lauren Weittenhiller, PhD**, and **Ann Kring, PhD**, found that people with schizophrenia were more likely to withdraw from others after being excluded, especially those who experience frequent exclusion in daily life. These findings suggest a cycle where exclusion perpetuates withdrawal, deepening social disconnection over time--and highlight the importance of fostering more inclusive environments for people with schizophrenia.



Schizophrenia Bulletin

Stephen Hinshaw, Distinguished Professor of Psychology, made a journey to Shanghai, China, to give three keynote talks at the Duke Kunshan University-sponsored "Mental Health and Disability Awareness Week" events, a first for the entire southern China region. He also led the national book launch of the Chinese translation of his award-winning memoir, "[Another Kind of Madness: A Journey through the Stigma and Hope of Mental Illness](#)".



Charter Hill Society for Psychology

The Charter Hill Society is a community of alumni dedicated to supporting UC Berkeley Psychology: its students and faculty, and each other. Members will be invited to special programming for Psychology as well as to events with Charter Hill members from around the College. Recent lectures and events have featured Nobel laureates and leading figures in Psychology and Neuroscience.

Charter Hill members make a three-year pledge to the Psychology Department of \$1,000 or more per year. Gifts directly support the students and faculty of Berkeley Psychology.

To become a member of the Charter Hill Society, make a three-year recurring commitment [here](#). (One-time gifts can also be made.)

For more information or questions, contact Anya Essiounina:
anya.essi@berkeley.edu

2025 Commencement

PhD Graduates

CONGRATULATIONS to all of our PhD GRADUATES!

Read on to learn about their graduate research, their post-graduation plans, and some advice they have for current and future graduate students.

Rebecca Corona, PhD:

Graduate Research: In my grad program, I've studied music, visual arts and aesthetics, and how engagement with arts relates to well-being and identity. The work I've done has mainly centered around assessing programming and collaborating on interventions with public cultural institutions such as Carnegie Hall and The National Gallery of Art.

Post-Graduation: I am continuing my research as a post-doc in the lab where I will mainly be working with The Adler Planetarium in Chicago to build accessible and impactful, awe-focused programming for their site and for science museums at large.

Advice: My advice is to get involved! There is nothing as healing as community and one of the best ways to build that here is by going to any and all events, helping with student-led orgs, volunteering on committees, etc. I did a lot of service during my program and met/strengthened bonds with lifelong friends doing it.



Lindsey C. Burnside, PhD:

Graduate Research: I research how people cope with social stratification. In particular, during my time at Berkeley I studied how people cope with racism-related stress and coping strategies' implications for psychological health.

Post-Graduation: I'm continuing my research program as a post-doctoral fellow!

Advice: I would have liked to know just how invaluable a resource peer knowledge is during the PhD program. It can feel uncomfortable to ask for help, but you are here to learn. And the insights you gain from those alongside you in the marathon are incomparable.



2025 Commencement

PhD Graduates



Rosalinda Nava, PhD:

Graduate Research: At Berkeley, I studied the effects of parental support on college students in terms of outcomes like self-efficacy, sense of belonging, and overall well-being.

Post-Graduation: I'm hoping to work on research and evaluation of projects in higher education.

Advice: Support your friends and let your friends support you! I also highly recommend that every grad student nurtures a hobby outside of the university. During grad school's lows, being in a space totally separate from academia can provide helpful perspective.

Sinclair O'Grady, PhD:

Graduate Research: My PhD research at Berkeley has focused on investigating developmental pathways to self-harmful behaviors, with emphasis on trait impulsivity, trauma, emotion dysregulation, and suicidality. My clinical interests have focused on providing evidence-based and trauma-focused interventions to children, adolescents, and adults.

Post-Graduation: I will be a postdoctoral fellow at UCSF's Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences in the Eating Disorder Program.

Advice: Highly recommend reading all emails about possible funding opportunities and applying to everything. Build a fun, full, and enjoyable life outside of graduate school. The best choice I made in graduate school was adopting and raising a labradoodle puppy.



Support more cutting-edge psychology research [HERE](#)

2025 Commencement

PhD Graduates

Eli Susman, PhD

Graduate Research: My research seeks to address two of the biggest barriers to meditative practices and self-care—time and habit formation—through a concept I coined “micropractices”. My findings show that practicing just 20 seconds a day of a micropractice I developed called self-compassionate touch is associated with increased self-compassion, reduced stress, and improved mental health, with even stronger benefits six months later when paired with a single 15-minute session teaching habit formation tools.

Post-Graduation: I'll be working on my forthcoming book, *Micropractice* (inspired by my Ph.D. research), which will be published in Fall 2026 by Avery. To get updates and explore accessible tools for well-being supported by research, subscribe to my newsletter: micropractice.substack.com.

Advice: I wish I'd known that rest isn't the opposite of work—it's part of what makes the work worth doing, and sometimes, what makes it possible. What helped most wasn't just the research, but the rituals: morning yoga, deep friendships, and the quiet act of remembering I'm more than what I produce.



Tyrone Sgambati, PhD

Graduate Research: My doctoral work focused on rising political polarization in the United States. In particular, I studied environmental factors that can lead to polarization and light touch interventions that can be used to combat polarization.

Post-Graduation: I will be continuing in the psychology department here at Berkeley as a postdoctoral scholar!

Advice: Build community. Spend time outdoors. Enjoy!



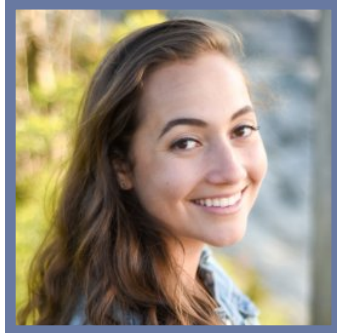
2025 Commencement

PhD Graduates

CONGRATULATIONS to all of our PhD GRADUATES!



Laura Bell, PhD



Catherine Byrd
Callaway, PhD



Joshua Confer, PhD



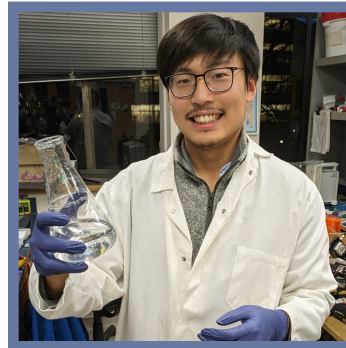
Matthew Elliott, PhD



Esther Howe, PhD



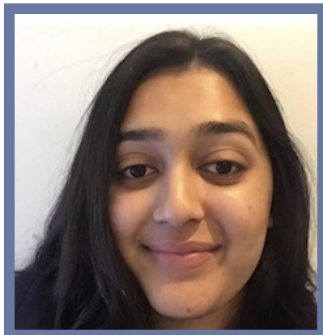
Mari Knuth-Bouracée,
PhD



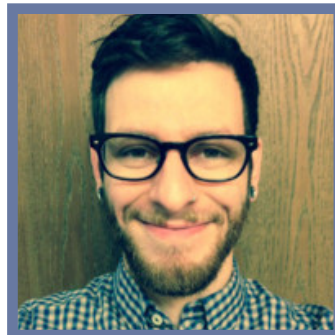
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