
LIFE COURSE AND AGING CENTER

LSU'S INTERDISCIPLINARY CENTER FOR TODAY, TOMORROW, AND BEYOND

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Dr. Laura King Speaks at 2012 LCAC Annual Luncheon

The LCAC hosted the 9th Annual Community Partners luncheon on Friday, March 16, 2012. Our keynote speaker was Dr. Laura King, a widely recognized expert in the area of personality and social psychology. Dr. King is the Frederick A. Middlebrush Professor of Psychological Sciences at the University of Missouri at Columbia where she has conducted many studies that address what it is that makes for a good life. She has studied goals, life stories, happiness, well-being, and meaning in life. In 2001, she won the Templeton Prize in Positive Psychology. Her work has been funded by the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Mental Health.



(left to right): Lilly Allen, Todd Pourciau, Laura King, Katie Cherry, Pamela Nezat and Janet McDonald.

She is currently the editor-in-chief of the Personality and Individual Differences section of *the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*.

Dr. Laura King provided a keynote address entitled, “The Meaning of Life: Happiness and Magic” where she discussed her current research. In her address, she noted that people do not construct meaning in their daily lives; rather they simply notice meaning that is already there. Throughout her address, Dr. King emphasized the importance of connections, associations, patterns, and reliable relationships that exist in the physical world, which happy, intuitive people are likely to notice. She described several findings from recent experiments where she has found that people who are in a happy mood find life more meaningful and satisfying. Her results imply that happiness and a natural capacity for joy propels our sense of purpose and meaning in life, rather than an effortful search for meaning resulting in happiness. Overall, her visit was a great success and her presentation was very relevant to many of the members of the LCAC.

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Gerontological Social Workers

Social workers in every practice area are delivering services to families across three, four, even five generations. Gerontological social workers (those trained to work with older adults) are already in high demand. In the years ahead, they will enjoy numerous possibilities for professional growth and innovation. To prepare social workers to be competent practitioners with older adults and their families, the LSU School of Social Work launched a Graduate Certificate in Gerontology in 2010 and has had tremendous growth and success since its start. The first year had eight students in its inaugural cohort with 25 organizations around the state collaborating as possible gero internship sites. These settings include V.A.s, hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, mental health, and home health agencies. The second year of the Gero Certificate, 2011-12, more than tripled its cohort size and doubled its gero internship settings. The second cohort graduated 25 students, and 50 organizations across Louisiana collaborated as possible gero internship sites. The current year of the Gero Certificate, 2012-13, again has seen an increase in its cohort size and gero internship settings from the previous year. The current, third cohort includes 31 students with 55 organizations participating as gero internship opportunities.



Gerontology certificate and thesis students who recently presented their research at the 2012 Alzheimer's Education Conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Pictured above with Dr. Scott Wilks are Angela Bowman, Rhonda Jordan, Katherine Schillings, and Lauren Lovelace.

Gero Certificate

The Graduate Certificate in Gerontology Program (Gero Certificate) in the LSU MSW Program began in 2010. This first year saw eight students in its inaugural cohort with 25 organizations around the state collaborating as possible gero internship sites. These settings include V.A.s, hospitals, hospices, nursing homes, mental health, and home health agencies. The second year of the Gero Certificate, 2011-12, more than tripled its cohort size and doubled its gero internship settings. The second cohort graduated 25 students, and 50 organizations across Louisiana collaborated as possible gero internship sites. The current year of the Gero Certificate, 2012-13, again has seen an increase in its cohort size and gero internship settings from the previous year. The current, third cohort includes 31 students with 55 organizations participating as gero internship opportunities.

LCAC Members Welcome Dr. Laura King



Adjunct Faculty

Wanda Spurlock RN, DNS Offering Care and Meeting the Challenges of Dementia

Caring for a person who is in a fragile mental or emotional state is tough and demanding work. Add to that challenge the complications of advancing age and memory loss, and you have one of the most difficult jobs a medical professional will ever face. Wanda Spurlock has built a 36-year career on exactly that combination of impossible tasks. As both a registered nurse and an educator, she has concentrated most of her life's work in the fields of psychiatric and geriatric care.

More specifically, she has focused on dementia care and Alzheimer's research, areas that tend to attract fewer practitioners because the challenges of communicating with patients are so great. Spurlock says she likes the work because it requires relying on her own creativity and intuition in addition to "all the tools and gadgets" common in most medical care. "You have to give more of yourself in order to communicate and establish a therapeutic relationship," she says. "I enjoy using myself as a therapeutic tool."

A professor in Southern University's School of Nursing, Spurlock has earned many accolades for her dedication to improving care for elderly people suffering from dementia-related diseases. In the past year, her work has landed her in the Louisiana State Nurses Association Hall of Fame, and she has also received the Nightingale Award for Outstanding Community Service.

Spurlock is a well-known volunteer, a nationally certified nurse educator and a fellow of the National Gerontological Nursing Association.

A Baton Rouge native, she graduated in 1976 from Our Lady of the Lake School of Nursing and later earned a doctorate in nursing science from LSU Health Sciences Center. It was in between those programs that Spurlock says "a light bulb came on" and she knew what she wanted to do. Having grown up as the youngest

of six siblings in a household she says was "all about character, a good work ethic and following your passion," Spurlock comments that her large extended family brought her close to older role models.

"I always held elderly people in high esteem, and when I started working in psychiatric services, I saw myself being pulled toward older patients, especially those who had cognitive impairment," she says. Spurlock says that Alzheimer's Disease poses a growing threat in a country whose population is aging, especially given the fact that no cure is in sight. "We don't have a way to prevent it or even slow down its progression," she says, pointing out that the need for mental health and geriatric care professionals, already in short supply, will only grow. Spurlock finishes, "We need more people with specialized skills to offer higher levels of care to the growing number of older adults in need."



Wanda Spurlock at work.



Sigma Phi Omega Annual Luncheon Induction Ceremony

Sigma Phi Omega (SPO) is a national academic honor and professional society of gerontology. Inductees at the 2012 LCAC luncheon included: Christopher Aiken (School of Kinesiology); Samuel Hensley (School of Social Work); and Johanna Noel and Ashley Ortega (Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders).

Student Highlights

Christopher Aiken – School of Kinesiology

Christopher is a second year doctoral student studying motor learning and control under the direction of Dr. Arend Van Gemmert. In 2007 he graduated from UNLV with his B.A. in psychology and criminal justice. He then attended the University of Tennessee and received his M.S. in kinesiology. His current research interests are in motor learning with an emphasis on how skill is acquired and the transferability of learned skills. His most recent paper titled “The effects of self-controlled video feedback on the learning of the basketball set shot” was published in August of 2012 in *Frontiers in Psychology*.

Alicia Briganti – Department of Psychology

Alicia is completing her last year as a doctoral student in the psychology department at Louisiana State University under the direction of Dr. Emily Elliott in the area of Cognitive Developmental Psychology. She received her bachelor’s degree in Psychology from LSU, and she then went on to the University of Texas at Austin, where she earned her master’s degree in Developmental Psychology. She is currently investigating the effects of chronotype on cognitive performance. Specifically, her research examines how “morning” and “evening” people perform on tasks when those tasks are completed at either their optimal or non-optimal time of day.

Johanna Noel– Department of Communication Disorders

Johanna is a second year graduate student in the department of Communication Disorders. She graduated with her Bachelor's degree in communication sciences and disorders from James Madison University in 2011. After graduation in May, she plans to move to Chicago to pursue a career in speech language pathology, focusing on treatment and rehabilitation of individuals following stroke and traumatic brain injury. She is also interested in working with

individuals with dysphagia and motor speech disorders.

Zhujun Pan – School of Kinesiology

Zhujun is a fourth year doctoral student in kinesiology under the direction of Dr. Van Gemmert. She graduated with her bachelor in electronic science and technology from the Southwest Jiaotong University in 2005. She graduated from Capital institute of physical education with her master’s degree in sport psychology in 2009. She is currently the President of Sigma Phi Omega, the gerontological honors society.

2012 LCAC Annual Luncheon



LCAC Alumni Corner

Zahra Kadivar, Ph.D.

Dr. Zahra Kadivar graduated in December 2009 with a doctoral degree from Louisiana State University's Department of Kinesiology under direction of Dr. Jan Hondzinski. She is currently a physical therapist at Harris Health system, the 3rd largest Public Healthcare System in the Country. She is also a visiting scholar at Rice University collaborating with engineers at Department of Mechanical Engineering and Material Sciences at Rice University to develop robotic devices for upper limb rehabilitation of adults with Spinal Cord Injury. Dr. Kadivar will be starting the Harris Health Neurological Physical Therapy Residency in September to become a specialist in neurologic rehabilitation.

Rania Mekary, Ph.D.

Dr. Rania Mekary is now an assistant professor in Social and Administrative sciences at Mass College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences University (MCPHS University). Her new post began January 14, 2013. She maintains a research appointment at Harvard Medical School where she studied epidemiology of nutrition and physical activity.

Brad Manor, Ph.D.

Dr. Brad Manor graduated in 2008 with a doctoral degree from Louisiana State University's Department of Kinesiology under the direction of Dr. Li Li. He then completed a two-year NIA-funded T32 "Translational Research in Aging" postdoctoral fellowship under the direction of Dr. Lewis Lipsitz at the Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School in Boston, MA. Brad is now a junior faculty member within the same Institution, where he directs the newly established Aging and Balance Control Laboratory. His current research combines biomechanical assessments of gait and posture with advanced brain imaging and non-invasive brain stimulation techniques to study the neural control and rehabilitation of balance in older adults.



Dr. Meghan Savage

Meghan Savage, Ph.D.

Dr. Meghan Savage graduated in May 2012 with a doctoral degree from Louisiana State University in Communication Sciences and Disorders under the mentorship of Dr. Neila Donovan. She is now an assistant professor at Southeastern Louisiana University. Her research interests are with people with language disorders following brain damage. Specifically, she is working on treatment methods to enhance conversational abilities in people with aphasia following a stroke.



Dr. Amanda Stead

Amanda Stead, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Dr. Amanda Stead graduated in December 2011 with a doctoral degree from Louisiana State University's Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders under direction of Dr. Paul Hoffman and Dr. Neila Donovan. She is currently an assistant professor at Pacific University in Forest Grove, Oregon starting a new master's program in speech-language pathology. Her primary research focus is on language discourse in healthy aging and dementia, and on the influence of assessment time and differing modalities including telehealth with older populations.

The Life Course and Aging Center *is an interdisciplinary initiative out of the Office of Research and Economic Development at LSU*

Community Partners

Barbara Auten, Executive Director Alzheimer's Services of the Capital Area
Ken Ritter, President/CEO St. James Place
Gwen Moore, PhD, St. James Place Retirement Community
David Aguillard, Executive Director, Catholic Charities
Todd Hamilton, Deputy Director, Catholic Charities
Kathy Vilas, JD, LCSW, Executive Director, Grief Recovery Center
Karen Giradot, LCSW, Hospice of Baton Rouge
Linda Beauvais, Executive Director, Capital Area Agency on Aging
Teri Fonenot, President/CEO, Woman's Health Foundation
Leigh Loe, Women's Hospital
Dr. Susan E. Nelson, Geriatrics, Lake Senior Care
Hugh Eley, Assistant Secretary, LA Department of Health and Hospitals
Jane Arieux Thomas, Governor's Office on Elderly Affairs
Twanda L. Lewis, Baton Rouge Area Foundation

Faculty

Katie Cherry, PhD, LCAC Executive Director, Department of Psychology
Priscilla Allen, PhD, Associate Executive Director of LCAC & Director of Development, School of Social Work
Brittan Barker, PhD, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
Mark Batzer, PhD, Department of Biological Sciences
Jennifer Baumgartner, PhD, School of Education
Teresa K. Buchanan, PhD, School of Education
Renee M. Casbergue, PhD, School of Education
Jane Cassidy, PhD, School of Music
Cyndi DiCarlo, PhD., School of Education
Neila Donovan, PhD, Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders
Margaret-Mary Sulentic Dowell, PhD, School of Education
Susan Dumais, PhD, Department of Sociology
Emily Elliott, PhD, Department of Psychology
Kenneth Fasching-Varner, PhD., School of Education
Gary Gintner, PhD, School of Education
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Jennifer Jolly, PhD, School of Education

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Sudipta Sarangi, PhD, Department of Marketing
George M. Strain, PhD, Comparative Biomedical Sciences
Arend W.A. Van Gemmert, PhD, School of Kinesiology
Michael Welsch, PhD, School of Kinesiology
Scott Wilks, PhD, School of Social Work

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Timothy Church, MD, PhD., Pennington Biomedical Research Center
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John Fortenberry, PhD, Louisiana State University – Shreveport
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