

# MSU OP Alumni Newsletter

Fall 2020



## New and Old Faces

This fall we welcomed our **1<sup>st</sup> year students** (page 2) as well the new Hannah Chair, **Dr. Quinetta Roberson Connally** (page 3)! You can also read about our **5<sup>th</sup> year students'** dissertations (page 4) and an interview with 2003 alum **Dr. Brad Chambers** (page 5).

## What's it Like to Be a Grad Student in 2020?

Well, it's pretty different for sure! Turn to page 11 to hear **how students are navigating life in the pandemic**. Even so, our students have excelled with **internships** (page 12) and external **fellowships** (page 13) this year.

## Research Spotlight

Read about our students and faculty who were awarded grants to research **the impacts of racism** (pages 6-7) and **COVID-19** (pages 8-10) in the workplace!

## Connect with Us!

Feel free to reach out to us at:

[msuorgpsychcolloquia@gmail.com](mailto:msuorgpsychcolloquia@gmail.com)

Linkedin Group: 'Michigan State

Organizational Psychology'

Instagram: @MsuOrgPsy



# Meet the 1<sup>st</sup> Years!

We are thrilled to welcome our newest students!

## Nathan Baker



*Where are you from?*

I'm from Mount Gilead Ohio and went to Ohio State University for my undergraduate degree.

*What makes you excited about organizational psychology?*

I think the fact that organizational psychology exists in an intersection of science and practice makes it especially dynamic. The complexity of real work-settings is a powerful sources of new ideas and I'm excited to explore them during my time here at MSU.

*What do you do in your spare time?*

In my spare time I run, play piano, read, and try to stay in touch with friends.

*Where are you from?*

I'm from Tampa, Florida (fun fact: Tampa is the lightning capital of the United States).

*What makes you excited about organizational psychology?*

I like that organizational psychology contains both the psychological theory and mathematical complexity that I find interesting, all while allowing me to do work that is impactful in a meaningful and real way for employees and organizations.

*What do you do in your spare time?*

In my spare time, I like to subject myself to scary movies, experiment in the kitchen, and attempt to emulate Jimi Hendrix's finesse on the guitar.

## Rachael Pyram



*Where are you from?*

I am from Austin, Texas. I went to Undergrad at Texas A&M University

*What makes you excited about organizational psychology?*

Organizational psychology makes me excited about getting to help improve the work environment and also help to better understand and improve employee well-being and satisfaction. I am also excited about cross-cultural and international applications in org psych, as I am interested in work in other countries.

*What do you do in your spare time?*

I enjoy trying out new restaurants, going on walks, watching educational videos on YouTube/documentaries, and learning about other countries and cultures in my free time.

## William Scott



Meet Our Newest Faculty!:

# Dr. Quinetta Roberson Connally

This fall we welcomed our newest  
John A. Hannah Distinguished Professor!



Dr. Quinetta Roberson Connally was previously at Villanova University as the Fred J. Springer Endowed Chair in Business Leadership and Professor in the Department of Management & Operations at The Villanova School of Business. Her scholarly contributions have been recognized through her receipt of numerous prestigious awards and elections to prestigious leadership positions. She serves as an elected member of the Academy of Management's Executive Committee, where she was inducted as president earlier this year.

***Q: What are you most excited about as a part of joining MSU?***

Beyond MSU's enduring reputation as a pioneer land-grant university and top research institution, scholars at MSU have always been at the top of my field. Much of the innovative and impactful research published in the top journals in management have been authored by faculty and doctoral students from MSU and more specifically, within the Org Psych department. Those people have also been my mentors, co-authors, and friends over the last 20 years. So, the opportunity to work with them as colleagues and be affiliated with the MSU brand was too exciting to pass up!

***Q: Can you tell us a little about your background and interests?***

I have always been a boundary-spanner. I have degrees in Organizational Behavior and Finance. My research has focused on diversity and organizational justice, employs quantitative and qualitative methods, and has been published in psychology, management, and law journals. I have taught in both business and labor relations schools. Therefore, I welcome the opportunity to leverage my interdisciplinary role to generate scholarship that draws on a diversity of fields and research traditions and transforms the world of work and society.

***Q: Can you tell us a little about any exciting projects that you currently have going?***

I am working on several projects that provide insight into current societal issues, including understanding and improving allyship, identifying strategies for creating more fair and inclusive work environments, and approaches for enhancing the effectiveness of diversity training. I should note that I am working with various Org Psych students on these projects.



# 5th Year Student Dissertation Research

## Danni Gardner

### **Does identity management beget work-life boundary management? An examination of lesbian, gay and bisexual employees**

Work-life boundary management has been conceptualized as the degree to which one segments (i.e. keeps separate) or integrates (i.e. brings together) their work and non-work spheres (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Clark, 2000; Ashforth, Kreiner & Fugate, 2000). However, for those with home lives or identities that are stigmatized within their workplace, how are they to manage such boundaries? The present dissertation suggests to the extent that bringing one's home life to the office exposes an employee to stigma at work, that employee may be limited in the degree to which they are comfortable integrating all life aspects. I argue that individuals of invisible stigmatized identities (sexual orientation, of present focus) face an additional constraint to the manner in which they are able to manage their work and non-work boundaries beyond those constraints faced by all workers: their identity management. Specifically, I suggest that the extent to which an individual distances (vs. affirms) their identity at work (Button, 2004) may impact the manner in which they enact boundaries between their work and non-work spheres. I evaluate this notion across two multi-source, multi-time point studies, modeling individual-level, job-level, and organizational level constraints to worker boundary management enactment.



#### *Favorite MSU Memory:*

I've really enjoyed our program-wide potlucks, as it's always a great time to unwind with the faculty and fellow grad students while eating a variety of delicious foods. The holiday potlucks are especially memorable, as students are often very creative with the gifts they bring!

## Christopher Dishop

### **A good soldier or random exposure? A stochastic, accumulating mechanism to explain frequent citizenship**

The terms, "extra miler" and "good soldier," refer to an employee who exhibits sustained, superior citizenship relative to others. Researchers have argued that this streaky behavior is due to motives, personality, and other individual characteristics such as one's justice perceptions. What is seldom acknowledged is that differences across employees in their helping behavior may also reflect differences in the number of requests that they receive asking them for assistance. To the extent that incoming requests vary across employees, a citizenship champion could emerge even among those who are identical in character. I present a situation by person framework describing how streaky citizenship may be generated from the combination of context (incoming requests for help) and person characteristics (reactions to such requests). I gather data via web-scraping, and I explore the idea by developing an agent-based model implemented in Julia and R.



#### *Favorite MSU Memory:*

I will never forget the sequence of Halloween parties hosted by Sergio and Nathan. Thank you both.

## Interview with an Alum: Brad Chambers

Brad Chambers received his Ph.D. from MSU in 2003. He spent time working at PDRI (2003-2005) and Aon (2005-2011) before starting Polaris Assessment Systems with Neal Schmitt and John Arnold in 2011. After selling Polaris to BTS in 2019, Brad transitioned to his current role as the Global Head of Talent Acquisition Solutions at BTS. Brad resides just outside of Cincinnati, OH, with his wife of 15 years, Sarah, and two sons, Adam (11) and Isaac (8).



***Q: Who did you work with while at MSU, and what were your primary interests?***

I worked with most of the I/O faculty while at MSU in one way or another. I quickly latched onto Neal Schmitt in the fall of '99 as I was starting at MSU and he was returning from a year at Aon if I recall. Over the next 4 years, I helped Neal with a number of consulting projects. I also worked with Ann Marie Ryan and Rick DeShon in the same manner. I think all of the consulting projects that I was involved in dealt with selection issues which was (and still is) my primary interest. I was part of Rick DeShon's and Steve Kozlowski's Teams lab for a few years as a research assistant; I still remember our weekly meetings in the basement of Baker Hall, cockroaches and all. It's been a few years, but I think Kevin Ford was on my Thesis committee, and Fred Oswald was on my comps committee.

***Q: What was one important experience you had at MSU that was key to your development?***

It's hard to narrow this down to one experience, so I'll describe a recurring experience. As part of consulting projects, I often found myself in a room with someone like Neal Schmitt or Ann Marie Ryan along with a client. As the client would ask a question, I enjoyed answering the question in my head and then comparing that to what Neal or Ann Marie would say to the client. Sometimes I was on target and sometimes I wasn't, but both were great learning experiences.

***Q: What advice do you have for current students?***

Be a sponge and soak up everything that you can. When you leave East Lansing, people will look to you for advice and guidance, and you will be expected to know your stuff. At the same time, don't forget that you do in fact "know your stuff." If you leave MSU with Ph.D. behind your name, you accomplished a great deal.

***Q: What is one piece of advice you have for recent MSU alumni that you wish you had known earlier in your career?***

Eat more Chipwiches from Melting Moments. Once you leave East Lansing, they are near impossible to find (though I did see them at Meijer once when I lived in Novi).

***Q: What is one fond memory you have of your time at MSU?***

I have many memories, but I think one that sticks out most prominently in my mind was when I dressed up as a prom queen for Brad West's Halloween party.

## Research Spotlight: SIOP Anti-Racism Grant

Earlier this summer, the SIOP Foundation and SIOP announced the new Anti-Racism Grant, a step toward addressing racism in work contexts using an I/O scientific lens. One of the funded projects was proposed by our own fourth-year graduate student, **Lauren Collier-Spruel**, and faculty member **Dr. Ann Marie Ryan**. Below, Lauren provides some additional context to the project, titled *“Performative Gesture or Genuinely Supportive: The Impact of Workplace Responses to the Racial Injustice Movement on Employees:”*



Lauren Collier-Spruel



Dr. Ann Marie Ryan

**Q: What drew you to this research question/overall topic?**

**Lauren Collier-Spruel:** America has a long history of police brutality against Black people and it is always devastating to see videos or images depicting these murders time and time again. What can make it harder for Black people is having to put on a calm facade and go into a school or work environment in which no one else acknowledges these murders. Workplaces and those in them often ignore these experiences, but the effect of racial injustice on those most affected by it can be psychologically deleterious as noted in McCluney, Bryant, King and Ali's (2017) paper on calling in Black. Initial statements from institutions and organizations on George Floyd's murder ranged from the expected platitudes to disappointing silence. However, as the summer of 2020 progressed, something changed. Non-Black people took to the streets in support of racial justice in a way I have not witnessed in my life and corporations were making statements that were definitively supportive of Black Lives Matter. During my internship, coworkers were taking action and providing support in a way I had never experienced. I was very curious to learn what was being said and done in other organizations. When Ann Marie reached out to the diversity research group over the summer to start new projects and one of them had to do with examining how organizations respond to racial injustice, I was interested in getting involved.

# — SIOP Anti-Racism Grant Winners, Cont. —

***Q: What is the current stage of the project?***

**Lauren Collier-Spruel**: We're currently reviewing the content of organizational statements made after Derek Chauvin murdered George Floyd and engaging in qualitative content analysis. The goal of this part of the project is to learn what actual statements made by organizations contain. We're also in the middle of collecting data on employee perceptions about racial justice communications made by top leaders, managers and co-workers in their organizations. I'm especially interested in examining how Black employees perceive these communications.

***Q: What excites you most regarding the project?***

**Lauren Collier-Spruel**: To me, the most exciting thing is being able to really examine how these statements are perceived at scale by Black employees. I am particularly hoping to learn whether there are elements of statements that might signal identity safety for Black employees (that their identity will be valued and will not be a barrier to success in the organization) and what elements of statements are perceived as being performative.

***Q: Any additional information you'd like to share?***

**Lauren Collier-Spruel**: While our research project is ongoing in terms of examining factors that contribute to supportive or performative organizational statements, some people and organizations have remained silent on racial injustice for fear of saying the wrong thing. However, silence only benefits the perpetrators of injustice and the systems that sustain them. Everyone who values diversity and hopes to help create inclusive work environments, must speak on societal injustices lest the cycle of silence and compliance continues. I hope that individuals, institutions and organizations will keep in mind that a statement in support of racial justice is only the first step. Words backed by substantive and continued action can pave the path for true change. This includes holding the perpetrators of injustice and harassment accountable and revamping systems with inclusion in mind.





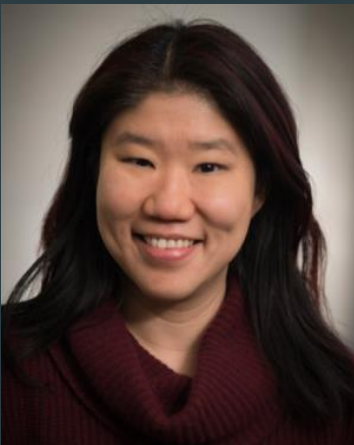
# Research Spotlight: NSF RAPID Grant

Program Members: Dr. Daisy Chang (Professor)

## Project Title: **The Roles of Organizational Contextual Factors in Worker Reactions to COVID-19**

### Project Description:

The COVID-19 pandemic has widespread influences on the cognition, attitudes, and behaviors of the global population because of its potential threat to the physical health. The goal of this project is to understand the impact of COVID-19 among working adults beyond the immediate threat of pandemic. Using the Terror Management Theory and Generativity Theories, we conceptualize COVID-19 as a salient mortality cue that can trigger individual employees' death awareness. The project addresses three specific research questions. First, we will explore the individual employees' psychological reactions towards death awareness triggered by COVID-19. Specifically, we will examine the adaptive (death reflection) and maladaptive (death anxiety) responses of workers. Second, we will explore the employees' behavioral reactions towards death awareness. Finally, we will explore the organizational contextual factors that may exacerbate or ameliorate workers' reactions towards mortality cue (i.e., COVID-19).



Dr. Daisy Chang

### ***Q: What is the current stage of the project?***

We are currently collecting data from employees. The research employs a three-wave survey design, and we have completed the wave 1 data collection, and are about to close the wave 2 data collection. We hope to launch wave three data collection in 3 weeks.

### ***Q: What excites you most regarding the project?***

We are hoping to find factors that can attenuate employees' death anxiety towards the pandemic, and the subsequent maladaptive behaviors such as withdrawal. More importantly, we hope to find contextual characteristics that promote employees' adaptive responses towards COVID-19. Instead of focusing on death anxiety, factors such as ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility practices may orient workers towards more adaptive responses towards the pandemic, which can lead to prosocial and helping behaviors.



# Research Spotlight: College of Social Science COVID-19 Small Grant Award

Program Members: Sergio Marquez (4th year), Jo Alanis (2nd year)

**Project Title: How Do Platform Based Gig Workers Balance Employment and Well-Being Goals During COVID-19?**

## Project Description:

This project investigates online platform-based gig workers (e.g., those relying on Uber, Instacart, Doordash, Postmates, etc.) completing work during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. We sought to understand how these workers manage their goals of seeking, maintaining employment and earning wages with their goals of remaining healthy and safe, reducing their risk of contracting COVID-19, and potentially spreading it to others. We are interested in seeing whether these goals are compatible or whether they come at a trade-off to each other. Further, we also measure coping strategies, exposure to incivility, and several other individual differences to see whether there are differences between those who are successfully balancing pursuit of these two goals versus those who are not.

## ***Q: What excites you about this project?***

Gig workers are not featured often in the organizational sciences, representing a serious oversight for a field interested in understanding the experience of work. So, being able to study this population and highlight their unique struggles and concerns during COVID-19 felt especially meaningful given their early role in helping curb the spread (e.g., through non-contact delivery) and their unfortunate lack of support (e.g., lack of proper PPE supply from organizations and subsequent protests; the ongoing debate regarding their employment status).

## ***Q: Any additional information you'd like to share?***

This project was a blessing and a curse when it came to data collection. Data were collected very slowly because there is no consistent, reliable way to reach this population. Reddit, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook posts were all different ways to try and reach this population. Our surveys were bombarded by spam responses and individuals who kept entering their information to increase their chances for selection. At one point, we had over 1100 responses and less than 100 viable participants. It was a blessing because through these recruitment mediums, we met so many individuals interested in helping us. We collaborated with the CEO of Honeybee, a participant pool website that features participants from Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. interested in completing psychological studies. We also collaborated with the CEO of Gridwise, an app developed to aid platform based rideshare workers efficiently complete work that also features over 120 thousand workers using their app. We also met several different admins of gig work Facebooks groups were interested in our research because they also help advocate for these workers' rights.

Sergio Marquez



Jo Alanis

# Research Spotlight: College of Social Science COVID-19 Small Grant Award

Program Members: Caitlin Briggs (4th year), Danni Gardner (5th year)

## Project Title: **Understanding Anti-Asian Bias During COVID-19: An Ingroup-Outgroup Perspective**

### Project Description:

This project sought to first understand what current prejudice and discrimination toward Asians in the U.S. look like in this unprecedented time (Study 1), as well as the factors that contribute to the stigmatization of Asians, and whether this is expected to carry over into the workplace as avoidance behaviors once we return to normal societal functioning (Study 2). Study 1 was a critical incident survey and Study 2 was an experimental survey with multiple timepoints. We found a sizeable amount of Asians in our Study 1 sample had personally experienced pandemic-related discrimination. Study 2 results supported assertions that COVID-19 blame attributions toward China predict anticipated hiring bias and increased physical distancing from Asian individuals in a work context.

### ***Q: What is the current stage of the project?***

We concluded data collection and analysis for this project earlier this year. The manuscript is currently under review at a journal, and we hope to present each of the two studies at the SIOP 2021 conference.

### ***Q: What excites you most regarding the project?***

We are really happy we were able to conduct this study on a sample that is underrepresented in our research. In Study 1 we received some really rich qualitative data that showed Asians in the U.S. are very concerned about these types of behaviors, so it feels good to be working on research that is really impacting people.

### ***Q: Any additional information you'd like to share?***

We posted about this study widely in an effort to reach our goal sample size, including posting on LinkedIn and Twitter. Thank you so much if you were a part of our effort to find participants!

Caitlin Briggs



Danni Gardner



# Graduate Student Life in A Pandemic

## What's it like to be a graduate student in 2020?

COVID-19 has impacted graduate student life in several ways. Students, both established and new, have had to adapt to new challenges and we have had to change how we all interact with one another.

New students starting this semester have had to be much more intentional about trying to form connections with older students and faculty. To do this, we've worked to organize socially distanced picnics, provide assistance in joining projects, and hosted planned social times on Zoom.

Current students have experienced many changes as well. For many, the shift from working in a collaborative office space to working at home has been especially challenging due to less clear boundaries between work and nonwork time, as well as the reduced social interaction.

To handle these issues, students have adopted a number of strategies. Some students dress in professional clothes and work regular hours in order to get in a productive mindset. Many have picked up new hobbies (such as unicycling) or adopted pets as a way of breaking up their routines and finding excuses to go outside.

The pandemic has also led to some positive changes for us. For some, these events stimulated new research ideas. Reduced commute times have freed up schedules, allowing for better self-care in many cases. It has also helped us remember how much we all rely on one another and has led to many planned virtual events and small in-person activities outside of school.



Students, faculty, and cats at a Halloween-themed Zoom Social Hour

# Student Internships

## Bridging the Scientist-Practitioner Gap:

Five current graduate students spent their summers interning - most of them virtually. As the number of COVID cases rose last spring, the number of available internships slowly diminished due to budget cuts and safety concerns. Nonetheless, five students from the MSU program spent their summers working and learning in private companies, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Despite being entirely virtual, our interns emphasized the value they saw in their organizations' intentional socialization within their virtual teams. However, common complaints touched on the lack of water cooler conversations and other informal networking opportunities, especially with other interns. Our students were most grateful for the opportunities to develop their business acumen and bridge the science-practitioner gap, sampling how our research as scientists can inform the work we do as practitioners. Below are brief profiles of the interns' experiences. If you have an internship or contracting role at your company and are interested in having MSU Org Psych students apply, send an email to Dr. Ann Marie Ryan ([ryanam@msu.edu](mailto:ryanam@msu.edu)).



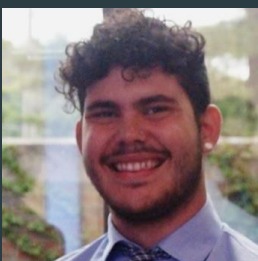
*Daniel Griffin* is a third year who spent his summer with Jackson National as a Workforce Analytics Associate. His projects included **data management** and updating and managing an **interview builder**.



*Caitlin Briggs* is a fourth year who worked with the U.S. Office of Personnel Management as a Personnel Research Psychologist Intern. Her projects included **program evaluation**, **survey research**, and **assessment questionnaire item development**.



*Lauren Collier-Spruel* is a fourth year who worked with Facebook as a UX Researcher Intern for the second summer in a row. Lauren's projects related to **user experience (UX)**. She has plans to continue her career at Facebook after completing her studies here at MSU.



*Sergio Marquez* is a fourth year who worked with Human Resources Research Organization (HumRRO) as a Research Associate. His projects included **literature reviews**; survey testing, training, and data collection; and both **qualitative and quantitative statistical analyses**.



*Zach Woessner* is a third year who worked with Ford Motor Company as a Talent Analytics Intern. His projects included **change management**, **diversity and inclusion**, **job analysis**, and **leadership development**.



# Student Fellowships

Among the highly competitive fellowships to which our graduate students apply is the Department of Defense's (DoD) National Defense Science and Engineering Graduate Fellowship Program (NDSEG). The award distributes more than \$123,800 over 3 years to its recipients. This year, two of our current third-year students, Ajay Somaraju and Daniel Griffin, received the fellowship in recognition of their exemplary research proposals at the intersection of organizational structures and computational models. We virtually sat down with Ajay and Daniel to discuss both their experiences applying and current research trajectory.

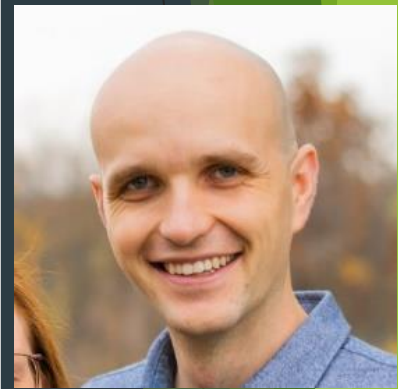
## ***Q: Why did you apply for the fellowship?***

**Ajay Somaraju**: Before organizational psychology, I was doing political science stuff. Something that's always been a hobby of mine is thinking about organizational research or organizational aspects of enlisted organizations. Because of my political science background, I wondered how terrorist organizations form and operate. The call that DoD put out for funding was related to that. I was interested in how economic, psychological, and cultural variables would influence the development of different organizational structures in terrorist organizations. My idea is to do this through a computational model. DoD values innovative and new methods. This is a way to run that study without collecting data where it would be difficult. What are you gonna do, administer self-reports to 300 terrorists?

**Daniel Griffin**: The DoD fellowship was directly in line with my research. I tend to use computer science and math, not make new computer science and math. The main topic is team resilience. I am looking at factors that influence how well teams deal with catastrophes, sudden changes, emergencies – shocks to their system. The goal is to understand what makes teams good so that we can help train teams and also put together interventions when things are going bad to course correct. On the flip side, looking at adversarial teams, how to do the least amount of work and the most amount of damage to make the team fall apart. It's a double-edged project on how to build our teams up and how to most effectively make the bad guys fall apart with the least amount of effort. Plus, my brother got a really nice fellowship in his grad school – and my wife is rolling her eyes – but there was a bit of competition. It was a non-trivial portion.



Ajay Somaraju



Daniel Griffin

## ***Q: What is the fellowship going to allow you to do?***

**Ajay Somaraju**: I can spend more time on research! Additionally, they pay for all classes I take. This is important because I'm pursuing some graduate certificates in the Computational Mathematics, Science and Engineering department that require additional credits.

**Daniel Griffin**: Spend time with my family! Because it funds me, I can spend more time doing research. We get the 20 hours usually spent being a grad assistant back. The second big thing is that it provides resources for going to conferences and training. I'm really excited (once COVID dystopia ends) to go to some stats and network courses.

# News and Announcements

- Sergio Marquez (current student) and Dr. Daisy Chang published an article in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*
- Sinhui Chong ('18) and Daisy Chang had a manuscript accepted at the *Journal of Applied Psychology*
- Courtney Bryant (current student) received a small grant from the Michigan Psychological Association Foundation for her dissertation work
- Courtney Bryant had a manuscript accepted with alumni Danielle King ('18) and Abdifatah Ali ('17; and coauthor Courtney McCluney) to *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: An International Journal*
- Dr. Kevin Ford's newest book "Learning in Organizations" has an official publication date of November 25
- Congrats to Dr. Christopher Dishop ('20) for defending his dissertation this fall!!

**Tell us what is new with you for our next issue!**

Part of the goal of this newsletter is for alumni to share news with one another. So give us the scoop! Send us a few sentences on your current projects, life and family updates, and personal or professional accomplishments. Additionally, if you have any feedback or future ideas for the newsletter, let us know!

You can reach us at: [msuorgpsychcolloquia@gmail.com](mailto:msuorgpsychcolloquia@gmail.com)