Florida Institute of Technology recently earned the distinction of being the most internationally diverse national university in the U.S. through rankings compiled by U.S. News & World Report (USNWR). Having the highest proportion of international students—33%—gained us that honor. As USNWR indicated, “Schools with a strong global presence often have a wealth of cultural groups and events, allowing international students an opportunity to share their food, music and traditions with their U.S. peers.” That is certainly the case at FIT where our 2,193 international students come from 123 different countries and are about equally divided between our undergraduate and graduate programs. While the international students are mainly in the engineering and computer sciences programs, the number in psychology and behavior analysis is increasing.

International students add another type of diversity to our rich mix of students. In contrast to other fields, psychology has been very good at attracting women to the field. In fact, as a result of a steady trend of higher proportions of women entering the psychology field, women now constitute 68% of the psychology workforce. That percentage holds true for us as well, where among our psychology student body, approximately 70% are women. In addition to gender diversity, we also seek out and include students who represent individual and cultural diversity in terms of their age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability. Our goal is to have our student body reflect the diversity of our nation.

Why is this diversity important and valuable? Most importantly, it helps students learn how to interact with the diverse clients and colleagues they will work with in the future. As the diversity of the U.S. continues to increase, graduates need to be competent in dealing with the wide array of individual differences they will encounter. That type of learning cannot be gained from reading text books; instead, it comes from direct interactions with people, such as fellow students, professors, clients and colleagues, from different backgrounds. These intercultural experiences enrich and expand students’ learning. This view is supported by a recent Gallup Poll which found that students who had contact with many international students rated their education as more valuable. Additionally, researchers have consistently found a strong relationship between students’ exposure to people from different backgrounds while in school and positive long-term outcomes, such as increases in cultural awareness and commitment to racial understanding.

Employers also value the type of learning gained in a diverse educational environment. One of the six competencies of career readiness, identified by the National Association of Colleges and Employers through their extensive survey of employers, is Teamwork/Collaboration. It is defined as the ability to “build collaborative relationships with colleagues and customers representing diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, religions, lifestyles and viewpoints. The individual is able to work within a team structure and can negotiate and manage conflict.” A diverse student body provides the means to learn these skills.

To derive the most value from diversity, faculty and administration must not only recruit diverse students, but also find ways to promote and encourage interaction, integration and intercultural learning. The benefits from such learning are immense and result in great gains in the students’ personal and professional development. Diversity works!
Participation Matters for the School of Psychology

*Jeffrey T. Spoeri, J.D., Director of Development*

On Dec. 1, 2015, as part of the national movement known as “Giving Tuesday,” Florida Tech launched a new tradition to celebrate the spirit of giving back. Our inaugural “Day of Giving” was an interactive and energizing online event showcasing the university and bringing alumni together to support their alma mater. Florida Tech alumni were encouraged to donate in any amount on that day, as the goal was not dollars but donors, and they did so in record numbers, shattering the goal of 500 donors by 11:00 that morning and eventually approaching 1,500 donors for the entire 24-hour period.

Throughout the day on Dec. 1, the university website and its social media accounts were buzzing with activity, with the goal of securing as many gifts of any size from as many alumni as possible. The highlight was a “throwdown” among Florida Tech’s five colleges, which were competing for a portion of a $50,000 prize pool. The higher the percentage of CoPLA alumni who gave on that day, the larger the college’s share of the pool! Although the College of Aeronautics won the competition, CoPLA finished third by more than tripling its own goal, outpacing the university overall!

Mark your calendars now for the second annual Day of Giving: Nov. 29, 2016, when once again, participation matters!

As always, if you have specific questions about the Day of Giving or any other matters related to supporting the School of Psychology, please contact me at 321-674-6162 or jspoeri@fit.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Reaccreditation of the Clinical Psychology Psy.D. Program

*Linda Maria Garcia-Shelton, Ph.D., Program Chair, Clinical Psychology*

The School of Psychology and the Clinical Psychology Psy.D. program are very happy to announce that we have successfully completed the program reaccreditation process and been granted a full seven years before we must again apply for reaccreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of the American Psychological Association (APA). Seven years currently is the longest period provided for psychology accreditation.

Our program continues to maintain its small class size (an average of 20 students per entering class), our emphasis on comprehensive training in the basic science that underlies clinical practice, and on excellent clinical training experiences provided both at Community Psychological Services at The Scott Center for Autism Treatment here on the FIT campus as well as at a large number of area health centers.

We are grateful for the long-standing considerable and indispensable support from the entire FIT community. This was evident to our APA site visitors who met personally with President Catanese, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer T. Dwayne McCay, Dean Kenkel of our own College of Psychology and Liberal Arts, and Sohair Wastawy, Dean of Libraries. In addition, the site visitors met with leaders from Instructional & Information Technology as well as many others on and off campus who support our program.

Without a doubt, the central contributors to the successful outcome of this reaccreditation process are the Clinical Psy.D. program faculty and students. Our program first received full APA accreditation in 1986. The faculty has continually altered the program (carefully and with great deliberation!) over the nearly 30 years of its existence to guarantee its academic and clinical excellence as the field evolved to better meet the health needs of the public, to whom we are accountable.

Our students are outstanding in bringing enthusiasm for our field and a willingness to work long and hard to meet the standards we set for them, and they set for themselves. Our alumni are a continual support to the program; many living locally serve as clinical supervisors for our practica and others at a distance keep us informed of their work, and send us copies of their publications for student use. The commitment of our alumni to quality clinical practice and to quality research in our field provides an excellent example to students, and to others we serve, of the dual obligation we have to science and to practice.

Our alumni have also contributed to a recently developed fund to support the presentation of student research at local and national psychology conferences. This financial support is of enormous help, since our program budget does not allow us to support all student travel expenses when they present their work regionally or nationally. Such common scholarly activities are an important part of their training as health service psychologists in a health system that places great importance on the use of evidence-based clinical interventions. The contributions alumni provide allow more students to have the experience of presenting scholarly work outside the confines of our university.
Recent Happenings in the On-Campus Behavior Analysis Programs

David Wilder, Ph.D., On-Campus Behavior Analysis Program Chair

Hello from Florida Institute of Technology’s (FIT) Behavior Analysis programs! In August 2015, we enrolled 37 new Master of Science students across the Melbourne and Orlando campuses. Four Ph.D. students also enrolled in the program. This is one of the largest classes we have ever admitted. In addition, we learned some good news recently: our program was ranked fifth in the world among behavior analysis programs in terms of faculty research productivity in applied behavior analysis! This ranking was recently described in a study published in the journal Behavior Analysis in Practice. The study examined publications among six journals in the field of applied behavior analysis from 2000 through 2014. Our program was the newest program in the top 5; the other ranked programs have been around for many decades. We are very excited about this honor and are confident that our new hires will enhance the clinical and research experience that students in the programs receive.

Faculty and students have been busy at recent conferences too. Many attended the 2015 annual convention of the Association for Behavior Analysis, International (ABAI), which was held in San Antonio, Texas, over Memorial Day weekend and the 2015 Florida Association for Behavior Analysis conference, which was held in Daytona Beach, Florida. FIT students presented faculty-led research on a variety of topics including enhancing physical activity among workers, treating food refusal among children with autism, increasing compliance among pre-school children, comparing methods of instruction to increase skills for children with autism, and examining the effects of extinction and behavioral persistence. Many of these presentations have either been accepted for publication or will be submitted for publication in the near future.

The on-campus behavior analysis program has continued its relationship with two area health care facilities. We are working with Nemours Children’s Hospital in Orlando to provide consultation on program and research development in applied behavior analysis. We are also working with Health First, which operates a number of hospitals in Brevard County, to provide performance management training to nursing and other hospital staff. Students and faculty working on both of these projects are excited about future opportunities with these and other health care agencies.

I/O Psychology Program Working on Grant with the Navy

Michelle Thackray & Chelsea LeNoble, I/O Psychology Graduate Students

The Naval Air Warfare Center Training Systems Division (NAWCTSD), a Naval base in Orlando, Florida, has recently contracted with faculty and students in the Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology program to conduct a cognitive task analysis for a military multiteam system. Cognitive task analysis involves structured interviews and focus groups designed to reveal the nature of the cognitive processes associated with the achievement of complicated tasks. Once the cognitive processes are understood, systems can be developed to improve the selection, placement, onboarding, training and performance management of individuals and teams working on those tasks.

Florida Institute of Technology’s (FIT) team of professors and students will be analyzing how various teams within the military must work together to achieve their mission in the electronic warfare domain—which involves electronic surveillance, attack and defense (such as radar jamming) activities. In particular, the FIT team is focused on the electronic warfare capabilities and interactions between Navy pilots operating a new aircraft and sailors aboard ships stationed around the world.

The goal of the project will be to identify communication and coordination patterns, as well as task interdependencies that exist between the pilots and sailors. The project team will conduct in-depth interviews with members of military personnel on electronic warfare teams to better understand what they do and how they interact with each other to successfully complete their mission. The results of the cognitive task analysis will be used to develop systems to assess the performance of the pilots and sailors.

Additionally, the analysis will be used to develop training and development programs. The project, led by Patrick Converse, Ph.D., is slated to unfold over the next year. Helping Converse manage the project are professors Erin Richard, Ph.D., and Jessica Wildman, Ph.D., who have expertise in task analysis, qualitative research methods and multiteam systems. Students working on the project include Michelle Thackray and Chelsea LeNoble as project leads, and Leah Ellison, Trevor Fry, Shelby-Jo Ponto, Philip Thomas and Charles Scott as project analysts. These students will have the opportunity to travel to Naval bases around the country to collect data with pilots and sailors, conduct interviews and focus groups, manage and analyze data, and write reports.
What’s New with the Undergraduate Psychology Program?

Vanessa A. Edkins, Ph.D., Undergraduate Psychology Program Chair

The undergraduate psychology program has been expanding over the past few years, and this growth seems to have only enhanced the caliber of students we are seeing pass through our doors. Each year, students from all over the United States, and the world, choose Florida Institute of Technology for psychology. Our students are also definitely going places: last year’s graduating class saw students being accepted into Dickinson School of Law and Arizona State University School of Law, the Psychological Counseling program at Columbia University Teacher’s College, the Experimental Psychology Ph.D. program at the University of Toledo; and we have a number of students who decided to pursue their graduate degrees here at FIT, in the Industrial/Organizational program, the Clinical Psychology Psy.D. program, the ABA program, and even in the Human Factors program in the College of Aeronautics.

This fall, we are kicking off another exciting year, welcoming 50 new students into the psychology department—and two new full-time faculty members! Darby Proctor, Ph.D., and Katrina Ellis, Ph.D., have joined the program, bringing new research opportunities and advising expertise directed toward our Animal Behavior and Neuropsychology concentration students. Under Ellis, students will be involved in research on the psychology of health-related decision-making with emphasis on assessment, quantitative modeling and decision education. Her current research studies investigate how patients (and their health counselors) communicate, interpret and use risk information to make decisions about their health care. Ellis’ research has implications for the creation of decision aids for inclusion in educational materials aimed at increasing patient understanding. With Proctor, undergraduates will have the opportunity to collect scientific behavioral data on the various primate species housed at the Brevard Zoo, including lemurs and spider monkeys. Additionally, advanced students will assist in conducting non-invasive cognitive experiments with the animals, exploring topics such as cooperation and behavioral economics.

These additions will complement our already diverse and active research program, and we also hope to see some great internship opportunities in the community, stemming from the animal- and health-related research initiatives. All in all, we are looking forward to another great year!
Manuel “Manny” Rodriguez: COPLA’s 2015 Outstanding Alumnus

Saloni Taneja, M.A., M.S., Journey Newsletter Correspondent

The College of Psychology and Liberal Arts (COPLA) honored Manuel “Manny” Rodriguez as the 2015 outstanding alumnus at the Florida Institute of Technology Homecoming Gala in November. Manny, who graduated with a Master of Science in Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) from FIT in 2004, is now the director of continuing education and product development for ABA Technologies, Inc., a company that specializes in instructional design and technology. Manny has over 10 years’ experience working with many organizations across the globe. He is an accomplished practitioner in the field of behavior analysis, highly regarded by his customers and colleagues alike. He has earned a reputation for his quick grasp of behavioral challenges and how to solve them offering practical real-world approaches. He has held positions both as an external consultant at the largest behavior-based consultancies, Aubrey Daniels International and the Continuous Learning Group, and as a global environmental health and safety leader within FMC Corporation, an international specialty chemicals company.

During his time at FIT, Manny was the co-creator of the Organizational Behavior Management track, now its own master’s degree within the School of Behavior Analysis, and he was the co-founder of the Society for Performance Management, now celebrating its 12th year. Before joining FIT, Manny earned dual bachelor’s degrees in psychology and criminology from Florida State University where his professional career in behavior analysis began. Recalling his time and significant experiences at FIT, Manny said, “Being a student of Dr. Jose Martinez-Diaz and Dr. David Wilder, there were so many aspects to my education I still use today. For me, the most significant learnings at FIT were my practicum experience which was made possible by Dr. Martinez-Diaz, my research for which Dr. Wilder mentored me throughout the whole process, and finally the encouragement to practice behavior analysis and organizational behavior management throughout my graduate career. Each of these was instrumental to my learning experience at FIT.”

Manny’s hat has quite a number of feathers! His experience spans various industries working with some of the largest organizations in the world such as Chevron, Exxon Mobil, Kraft Foods, Syncrude, Cigna, Heinz, Canadian National Railway, Duke Power, ADM, Blair, Bell Canada, Stewart Enterprises and FMC Corporation. Manny has led large-scale change efforts, providing one-on-one coaching with executives and senior managers, developing and delivery engaging professional development learning events, and led teams of professionals to achieve significant performance. Manny attributes his professional success to his experiences at FIT. He said, “Throughout my career, I have built upon what I learned at FIT, but further pulled from those early experiences to support everything I do. From applied research, to mentoring others, I continue to bring my FIT experience to my professional career. For example, a few years ago I published a peer review article of a large-scale organizational change effort I lead as an external consultant. I remember the process of writing and conducting the research, pulling from my work with Dr. Wilder along the way. As a manager for a Fortune 1000 chemical company, I led teams of people to improve performance, echoing the very words Dr. Martinez-Diaz said to me and my fellow students all those years ago ‘it is about making a difference in people’s lives, that’s what we do.’ Everything I learned at FIT has truly supported my professional career, and I will never forget it.”

Manny’s leadership in the science of human behavior has impacted the lives of thousands of leaders and employees nationally and internationally.

Manny has some encouraging and promising things to say about his alma mater. When asked what excites him the most about FIT currently, he said, “A few things come to mind. The ABA hybrid master’s program, which is quickly becoming one of the best programs with an online component, reaching worldwide attention. The Scott Center for Autism Treatment is bringing ABA services and resources to the local and online community respectively. It is amazing to see the tremendous advancement of ABA therapy to treat children diagnosed with autism. The growth of The Scott Center is amazing and looks to be making significant further growth. The School of Behavior Analysis’ Organizational Behavior Management (OBM) program is growing as well, bringing more and more students to learn the power of behavior science applied to organizations and growing relationships to support local businesses through training, consulting and full-scale project implementation. This is exciting. Finally, the introduction of the Buzz Aldrin Space Institute at FIT, and bringing in Buzz Aldrin as a faculty member. Truly, the skies are the limit with this new advance in the university’s program.”

When Manny is not working, he is giving back to the larger professional field of behavior analysis, currently serving on the board of directors as the current president-elect for the Organizational Behavior Management Network, a 500-member special interest group within the Association for Behavior Analysis International. Talking about his vision for the future, Manny said, “I hope to be leading my company’s advancement of technology and thought leadership to our customers. I hope in 10 years our company is the ‘go-to’ organization for behavior analysis through leadership, education and consultation to individuals looking to learn and grow in the field, for organizations who want to make a significant difference for their people and their customers, and for society as a whole making a socially significant impact for the betterment of people’s lives around the world. The dissemination of our science is very important to me.”

Manny’s advice to the students at FIT is, “There is no limit to what you can do with the education you are getting from FIT. It is up to you to ask the faculty and university what they you can do. Seek opportunities, ask the questions, put yourself out there, and above all, never underestimate what can be done. Everything I did while at FIT was based on the premise that nothing is impossible.”

He and his wife Kelly, daughter Sabrina, and son Aidan enjoy living in Florida and look to make Melbourne their long-term home.
Florida Tech School of Psychology Welcomes New Faculty Members

**Xinxuan Che, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor of Industrial/Organizational Psychology*  
Ph.D., Industrial/Organizational Psychology, University of South Florida, 2015  
M.A., Industrial/Organizational Psychology, University of South Florida, 2012  
B.S., Applied Pharmacy (minor in Applied Mathematics), Peking University, 2008

Xinxuan Che graduated from the University of South Florida with a Ph.D. in Industrial/Organizational Psychology in 2015. Prior to joining FIT, Che was a senior research scholar at Johns Hopkins University, Armstrong Institute for Patient Safety and Quality where she worked on interdisciplinary research and consulting teams to improve patient safety and quality of care through leadership development, training simulations and team building. She has also led and contributed in many workplace safety improvement projects on safety leadership, leadership in health care teams, organizational safety culture and simulation-based leadership training. She received a grant from the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health to conduct her dissertation, which was a longitudinal study of the role of leader-subordinate interactions on work-related stressors and their impact on workplace safety behaviors and employee well-being of nurses. Che’s current research interests are in the areas of organizational citizenship behaviors, occupational health psychology, leadership and teams, workplace safety, and patient safety and quality of care in health care.

**Christy Alligood, Ph.D., BCBA-D**  
*Assistant Professor of Behavior Analysis*  
Ph.D., Psychology, West Virginia University, 2007  
M.A., Psychology, University of North Carolina-Wilmington, 2003  
B.S., Psychology, Brigham Young University, 2001

Christy Alligood is a doctoral-level Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA-D). Since 2007 she has worked at Disney’s Animal Kingdom in Orlando, where she focuses on projects involving training, enrichment and animal learning. Alligood has also worked in home, school and clinic settings with children with challenging behavior and their caregivers and teachers, and supervises students in these areas of practice. She is the coordinator of the Association for Behavior Analysis International (ABAI) Special Interest Groups Board, co-coordinator of the ABAI Applied Animal Behavior Program Area, secretary of the Southeastern Association for Behavior Analysis, and At-Large Representative to ABAI Executive Council.

**Darby Proctor, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor, Psychology*  
Ph.D., Psychology: Cognitive Sciences, Georgia State University  
M.A., Biological Anthropology, Georgia State University  
M.S., Business Management, University of Florida  
B.A., Biological Anthropology, University of Florida

Darby Proctor’s research delves into the evolution of human cognition, using multiple species to study the topic. She comes to us after working for two years on a National Institutes of Health funded Postdoctoral Fellowship in Research and Science Teaching (FIRST) at Emory University. The fellowship was in conjunction with the Yerkes National Primate Research Center and was under the direction of renowned Primatologist, Dr. Frans de Waal. Here, Proctor extended her dissertation research investigating the application of economic decision models across primate lineage, focusing on risk-taking and gambling behaviors. Her work won her the American Psychological Association Dissertation Research Award and was published in one of the top tier comparative psychology journals. Proctor has plans to continue her inter-species work with the population of animals housed at Brevard Zoo.

**Yanerys Leon, Ph.D., BCBA-D**  
*Site Director & Assistant Professor, Professional Behavior Analysis*  
Ph.D., Behavior Analysis, Florida Institute of Technology, 2012  
M.A., Applied Behavior Analysis, University of Maryland Baltimore County. 2009  
B.S., Psychology, University of Florida, 2007

Yanerys Leon is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst with experience in the assessment and treatment of severe behavior disorders and in the development of adaptive skills for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She has taught undergraduate and graduate
courses in behavior analysis and supervises practicum students working toward board certification. Leon’s research interests include functional analysis and treatment of problem behavior, reinforcer assessment, and conditioned and token reinforcement. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, Behavioral Interventions*, and the *Journal of Behavioral Education*.

**Nicole Gravina, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor, School of Behavior Analysis*  
Ph.D., Applied Behavior Analysis, Western Michigan University, 2008  
M.A., Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Western Michigan University, 2008  
B.S., Psychology, Western Michigan University, 2003

Nicole Gravina’s master’s thesis examined the role of self-monitoring in establishing and increasing safe working behaviors. Her dissertation evaluated the consultant workshop model in a human services setting for improving and sustaining performance. She also completed a research fellowship at Liberty Mutual Safety Research Institute where she conducted a study to extend her thesis work. Gravina’s current research interests include leadership behaviors, safety and self-management. She lives in West Melbourne with her husband, John, two boys Cooper and Wesley, and cat Homer.

**Katrina M. Ellis, Ph.D.**  
*Assistant Professor, Psychology*  
Ph.D., Applied Cognitive Science and Human Factors, Michigan Technological University  
M.S., Cognitive/Human Factors Psychology, Kansas State University  
B.S., Psychology, Michigan Technological University

Katrina Ellis’ research focuses on the psychology of health-related decision-making with emphasis on assessment, quantitative modeling and decision education. Specifically, Ellis is concerned with risk literacy; that is, how patients (and their health counselors) interpret and use risk information to make decisions. Some of her published research in the area shows that both medical professionals and patients misinterpret risk and that the use of simple visual aids and decision tools can quickly educate people on the statistics which may result in better decision-making. Ellis also shines in the classroom, receiving an Outstanding Teaching Award from her alma mater, as well as a nomination for the school’s Excellence in Teaching Award. Her passion in the classroom fuels another of her research interests: STEM education and the recruitment of underrepresented groups to STEM programs. In addition to her academic life, she frequents the university pool for fitness and enjoys spending time with her husband, son and dog at the beach.

**Byron Neff, Ph.D., BCBA-D**  
*Site Director & Assistant Professor, Professional Behavior Analysis*  
Ph.D., Behavior Analysis, Florida Institute of Technology, 2011  
M.S., Behavior Analysis, University of North Texas, 1997  
B.S., Biology, University of Illinois, 1989

Byron Neff is an assistant professor and site director for one of Florida Tech’s affiliate agencies that provides services to children with autism. His course work helps graduate students learn how to apply the science of behavior and integrate research into current clinical practices. Neff enjoys improving the performance of organizations (and athletes) via gap analyses, process mapping and leadership coaching. Previously, he worked for ABA Technologies as a student advisor and curriculum development specialist. From 1997–2009 he was the director of the Behavior Analysis Services Program (BASP) at the University of South Florida. BASP was a statewide program that provided training and consultative services to Florida’s foster care system. As a research associate at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center, Neff developed behavior-based safety protocols that focused on proper storage, handling and disposal of blood-borne pathogens, radioactive isotopes and other biohazards materials.
Successful Summer for The Scott Center for Autism Treatment

Courtenay Porter, Director of External Relations, The Scott Center for Autism Treatment

It has been a full summer for Florida Institute of Technology’s Scott Center for Autism Treatment! After An Evening of Hope wrapped up in April, our fundraising efforts were redirected toward the Kiwi Tennis Club’s 10th Annual Revolution Technologies Pro Tennis Classic. Held at the club from May 3–10, 2015, the event featured a United States Tennis Association-sanctioned tennis tournament and a Courtside Celebration Benefit, where revelers enjoyed food, drink and live and silent auctions emceed by Sheriff Wayne Ivey. The event raised $50,000 in scholarship money to be used by families seeking treatment at The Scott Center.

“We’re so grateful to the Kiwi Tennis Club for this fantastic, impactful donation,” said Scott Center Executive Director Michael Kelley. “The funding will go a long way to serving children and families who otherwise would not receive services.”

In June 2015, the Brevard County Sheriff’s Office held Dancing for the Space Coast at Florida Institute of Technology’s Clemente Center. During the glamorous evening, 12 members of the community took to the dance floor to raise money for charities and compete for the chance to win Grand Champion. The winner of the event was Charlie Nash, a local attorney. But arguably, the real winners of the event were The Scott Center for Autism Treatment, Serene Harbor and the Brevard Symphony Orchestra, who were all presented with checks for $37,555.70 each as a result of the dancers’ fundraising efforts.

As summer closed, Southeast Petro Distributors helped to bring the 110 cast members of the global service and education organization, Up with People, to Melbourne. The cast took part in community service with multiple philanthropic organizations throughout Brevard, including The Scott Center for Autism Treatment. Their weeklong stay culminated with two performances of their show, The Journey, which was open to the public. Being named the beneficiary of the event, $14,015.63 in the form of proceeds from the performances was donated to The Scott Center.
The Clinical Psychology program at FIT honored Robert Ruchinskas, Psy.D., with the Outstanding Alumnus award. Ruchinskas is ABPP board certified in both clinical neuropsychology and rehabilitation psychology and a Fellow of both the National Academy of Neuropsychology and the American Psychological Association. He is currently an associate professor at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center at Dallas where he holds appointments in the Department of Psychiatry and in the Department of Neurology & Neurotherapeutics and is integrally involved in a multidisciplinary Memory Disorder Clinics which functions as the clinical arm of one of 21 NIA approved Alzheimer’s Disease Centers. Prior to this, Ruchinskas was on faculty at Temple University School of Medicine for 12 years and served as Director of Clinical Training for the Pre-Doctoral Psychology Internship for three years. He was also an adjunct faculty member for the Doctoral Psychology Program at LaSalle University for 10 years, and is actively involved in APA’s Committee on Accreditation as a pre-doctoral internship site visitor. He has 20 first-authored publications on a variety of topics including differentiating normal from pathological aging, coping with chronic illness, and ethical issues in medicine with an emphasis on determining decision-making capacity.

When asked how his education at FIT helped him, he stated, “Besides being exposed to the basics of neuropsychology, training at FIT provided me with an invaluable foundation in clinical psychology. My first faculty position at Temple’s School of Medicine involved a proportion of time being spent working with the Pain Management Clinic until the neuropsychology service blossomed. I naturally felt underprepared for managing people with chronic pain, particularly since UVA had specific fellowship training for the psychological management of pain while I was a neuropsychology fellow. I told the pain management fellow about my reservations about practicing outside of my area of competence, and he assured me that ‘90% of pain management is utilizing good clinical psychology skills’ which made me feel better as I firmly believe that FIT did its job in this regard. The second aspect of my Temple job was in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation. Over time I would explain that a rehabilitation psychologist was ‘somebody who knows both neuropsychology and how to practically use that knowledge to help patients.’ Much of this involved evaluating and treating not only problems with cognition but also with mood, behavior, motivation, compliance, family dynamics, team dynamics and ethics. Again, FIT’s course work was strong in these areas.”

Ruchinskas, who has spent the last 20+ years telling trainees and colleagues that a strong training in clinical psychology opens innumerable doors said, “My training at FIT shaped my view of how we produce effective practitioners of psychology.”
School of Psychology Adjunct Faculty Leads Award-winning Police Department

Jim Reynolds, Academic Program Chair for Criminal Justice and Homeland Security

Florida Institute of Technology’s adjunct faculty member Keith Touchberry is Chief of Police with the Fellsmere Police Department, which recently was honored with a statewide award for its community policing initiatives.

In July 2015, the Fellsmere Police Department (FPD) received the Rocky Pomerance Excellence in Policing Award for small agencies from the Florida Police Chiefs Association. The department was honored for its work with Partner Institution Policing (PIP), which seeks to strengthen partnerships between law enforcement, schools, community organizations and government agencies. “This initiative has made a tremendous difference; all of us are able to come together as a community, work together on our issues and pursue shared solutions,” Touchberry said in a statement at the time.

FPD’s programs include participation from FIT student interns, who serve in a variety of roles working with officers, community groups and organizations in PIP such as the Boys & Girls Club. SOP Forensic Psychology students Corey Voce, Bridget Godfrey, Taylor Troy, Julie Buskirk, Elizabeth Eby and Matt Garcia are among the FIT students who have or are working with FPD under Chief Touchberry’s tutelage.

“Partner institution policing enables us to collaborate more closely with families, churches, schools, youth organizations and government to reduce crime and improve quality of life. We are able to achieve these policing goals through the Fellsmere Action Community Team (FACT),” said Chief Touchberry.

Jim Reynolds, Academic Program Chair for Criminal Justice, and a member of the interview team for undergraduate internships said, “Our students are able to learn firsthand about community issues and problem-solving, and contribute to the efforts of their respective internship organizations, such as FPD. Experiential learning is a valuable take-away that can assist them in their future careers.”

“I think people genuinely appreciate the opportunities that law enforcement agencies give them,” said Touchberry, a Marine Corps veteran who spent 24 years with the Vero Beach (Florida) Police Department, where he rose to the rank of captain, before his appointment as Fellsmere’s police chief in September 2013. He has taught criminal justice at FIT since 2008.
Clinical Psychology Students Receive Air Force Scholarship

Denise Vagt, Clinical Psychology Psy.D. Student

Although there are a multitude of personal and professional reasons Psy.D. clinical psychology students enter into the program, the desire to serve our nation’s military members and their families is a common theme. Currently, there are over 20 students in our program who envision themselves working with military members throughout their career and dozens of our graduates are currently working as psychologists in the Veterans’ Affairs health care systems, Department of Defense organizations or as active duty military members. For these individuals interested in continuing on in a career with the military, there are scholarship opportunities that should be investigated during graduate school. FIT’s clinical psychology students have had particular success in obtaining acceptance into the Armed Forces Health Professions Scholarship Program (HPSP). The HPSP pays for 100% of the student’s tuition fees, books and also pays for most school-related expenditure. The scholarship also provides a living stipend of approximately $22,000 per year while the student is completing school. The goal of the program is to identify individuals who would benefit the military psychology staff after graduation and provide them with the financial support they need to complete school. After completion of the degree, the recipients serve as an active duty military psychologist for the same amount of time they were receiving the scholarship, but for no shorter than three years. The HPSP, which FIT clinical psychology students have had the most success in applying to, is through the United States Air Force. Most Air Force HPSP students apply for internship at one of three Air Force active duty internship sites, which eases the transition between student and active duty military life. The Air Force HPSP is currently for three years, two years of graduate school and one year of internship. Important factors for a competitive application include involvement with the clinical psychology program, community involvement and volunteer activities, and letters of recommendation from faculty or other psychologists. The application process is time consuming, extremely detailed and nerve racking; however, receiving the scholarship is a reward well worth the effort as it allows students to focus more on clinical training and academic pursuits during school due to reduced time spent working on extra jobs or finding other ways to pay for school. 

Denise Vagt is one of the recipients of the HPSP scholarship.

Jessica Pike, Psy.D., is an FIT alumna and Air Force HPSP recipient. She is currently an active duty member of the United States Air Force in Germany.
I give my annual support to FIT’s School of Psychology for the coming year in the amount of: $50 $75 $100 $ Other $ __________________________

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