

# PSYCHOLOGY

UC Riverside Psychology Newsletter | Issue 10 | Editor: Rachel Wu, Ph.D.

## Select graduate student achievements

**Tania Rodriguez:** UCR Dissertation Research Grant, UCR Psych Carolyn Bennett Murray Graduate Award for Contributions to DEI

**Shannon Brady:** UCR Psychology Rosenthal Research Award

**Bethany Tavenner:** UCR Psychology Rising Star Award

**Matthew Kersting & Hunter Sturgill:** UCR Psychology Mentoring Award

**Matthew Kersting:** Presley Center's Graduate Student Fellowship, UCR Dissertation Research Grant

**Dr. Katherine Nelson-Coffey:** International Positive Psychology Association Early Career Researcher Award

**Chelsea McElwee:** UCR Center for Healthy Communities mini-grant

**Shannon Brady:** Postdoc at Rutgers University

**Liz Wilson:** Postdoc at Harvard

**AnnaMaria Boullion:** Fellow of the Society for Research in Child Development

## New faculty 2025-2026



**Dr. Bernardette Pinetta** studies how youth of color develop their ethnic-racial identity and how such views provide the foundation for their orientation toward social justice.



**Dr. Na Yeon Kim** investigates individual differences in perception and attention across the autism spectrum and how these differences emerge and change from childhood to adulthood.



**Dr. Deepa Ramamurthy** investigates how recent experiences guide attention and perception based on neural mechanisms to better understand function in our daily lives and dysfunction in neuropsychiatric disorders.



**Dr. Kiera Coulter** studies the health and well-being of racially and ethnically minoritized youth, guided by strengths-based and community-engaged approaches. She will be starting January 2026.



## DEI highlight

**Dr. Benson G. Cooke** from the University of the District of Columbia gave an invited colloquium entitled, "The Transgenerational Impact of Depressive Disorders and Racial Trauma Epigenomically and Psychologically"

**Drs. Aerika Loyd, Diamond Bravo, and David Lo** teamed up with Dr. Juliet McMullin at UC Irvine to author the chapter titled "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice in Health Research and Professional Practice with Children and Adolescents" in the *APA handbook of pediatric psychology, developmental-behavioral pediatrics, and developmental science: Developmental science and developmental origins of risk and resilience in childhood and adolescence*.

## Events

**Madison Montemayor-Dominguez and Stephen Cadieux** are co-organizing the California Well-Being Conference, to be held at UCR on April 24-26, 2026.

<https://events.ucr.edu/event/california-well-being-conference-cawbc>

## New grants

From July 2024 to September 2025, our faculty had 79 active federal, local, and foundation grants, summing a grand total of more than \$30.6 million in research funding to move science forward. Here are a select few new grants:

**Dr. Khaleel Razak** received a new GAANN training grant of nearly \$1 million for Neuroscience Ph.D. students to increase applications, recruitment and training of doctoral neuroscience students at UCR.

**Dr. Kate Sweeny and Liz Davis** received a \$700,000 grant from the Templeton Religion Trust to explore patience and adolescent development.

**Dr. Olivia Atherton** received a UCR Hellman Fellowship.

**Dr. Misaki Natsuaki** received a \$1 million Charitable Gift Award from Barbara Sinatra Children's Center Foundation to support research on child maltreatment.

**Dr. John Franchak** received an NSF grant (\$424,000) to use wearable sensor technology and artificial intelligence to study how infants develop motor skills in their everyday environments.

**Drs. Rachel Wu and Lani Bennett** received an NSF grant (\$700,000) to investigate how learning opportunities before and after retirement relate to learning abilities, cognition, and neural outcomes.

**Dr. Kalina Michalska** received a grant from Rapid Response Bridge Program funded and administered by the William T. Grant Foundation and The Spencer Foundation. She also received a \$50,000 grant from the Steward Family Foundation.



## Outreach

- **Dr. Sonja Lyubomirsky's** research profile was featured in [The New York Times](#).
- **Dr. Aerika Loyd** partnered with Imoyase Community Support Services and the Community Health Equity Group to assist [LA County](#). She also helped develop the [Bold Vision Youth Thriving Survey](#) to elevate the young voices.
- **Dr. Megan Robbins** was interviewed by [Vox](#).
- **Dr. Kalina Michalska** was featured on [KCRW's Press Play](#) on the effects of COVID on girls' brain structure
- **Dr. Pamela Sheffler** (former Ph.D. student with **Dr. Cecilia Cheung**) was featured in [Forbes](#).
- **Dr. Rachel Wu** was featured on [apa.org](#).

## Donate to UCR Psych

[UCR Psychology Department general fund](#) (undergraduate/graduate student support, workshops, infrastructure, etc.), [Guardian Scholars \(helping emancipated foster youth in higher education\)](#).

## New faculty awards

**Dr. Tuppett Yates** received the 2025 Bowlby-Ainsworth Award in recognition of her distinguished contributions to developmental research on attachment and trauma, as well as her outstanding mentorship in the Bowlby-Ainsworth tradition.

**Dr. Rachel Wu** received a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) from President Biden. She also was elected as a fellow of the American Psychological Association.

**Dr. Olivia Atherton** received the 2025 Service Award from the Association for Research in Personality and the 2025 SAGE Early Career Trajectory Award from the Society for Personality and Social Psychology

**Dr. Kalina Michalska** received the University Faculty Honors Mentor of the Year Award.

**Dr. Stephen Antonoplis** received the department's Faculty of the Year Award.

**Dr. Jimmy Calanchini** is a Graduate Division Faculty Fellow who will examine current graduate student mentorship training and practices.

## Other news

Two UCR undergraduates (Jessica Boyd and Sierra Sutton) attended the 2025 Insure the Uninsured Project (ITUP) Conference as part of **Dr. Aerika Loyd's** grant with UCI and UCM. Their inspiring reflections are on the [Cal-IHEA website](#).

The Neuroscience Graduate Student Association, with support from the Psych department, hosted the 15th annual Brain Awareness Day at UCR to get young students interested in neuroscience and higher education, especially students underrepresented in the sciences.

The KIND Lab, led by **Dr. Kalina Michalska**, hosted a lunch and Youth Advisory Panel meeting with its Community Advisory Board.

UCR Psychology participated in the national [PSYC Good Deed Day](#) On October 8, 2025.

