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Research Profile: Nicky Ozbek, Ph.D.

Dr. Nicky Ozbek has been a part of the UTC family for 42 years. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Georgia. She then became the first of the university's own undergraduate students to be accepted into one of their graduate programs! There, she earned her Master's degree and subsequently her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology with a co-major in Child Development. Following a post-doctoral fellowship at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Dr. Ozbek finally found her way to Chattanooga.



DR. NICKY OZBEK

Dr. Ozbek has been invested in the field of psychology since her freshman year of college. "I took that Intro Psych class... and fell in love with psychology," she says.

"I took that Intro Psych class my freshman year and fell in love..."

Fast forward several years, Dr. Ozbek is a clinician and a scholar, and she continues to love the discipline. She is particularly drawn to how research and clinical practice help her "find answers to things that [she] read and didn't understand or couldn't explain."

UTC's Olfaction Lab



Clockwise from top: Madison Beckner, Donica Hilario, Adeola Ijiyode, Olivia Dephillips, Hannah Turner.

As a practicing clinical psychologist and professor at UTC, Dr. Ozbek's research questions have often been related to clinical issues. The research area that captured her attention most recently involves how our sense of smell - olfaction - relates to other psychological phenomenon. Dr. Ozbek's journey of studying olfaction began during her time serving the Chattanooga community at Siskin Hospital. She noticed that people with certain types of brain injuries had lost their sense of smell. So she and her research team interviewed three people who had decreased olfaction sensitivity.

This video interview was funded by the William H. Wheeler Odor Foundation, which continued to fund additional future projects!

One of these additional projects included developing an olfaction sensitivity test, the WUTC (Wheeler UTC Olfactory Threshold Test). [Click here](#) to hear Dr. Michael Biderman, Professor Emeritus in Psychology, discuss the human factor in olfactory measurement. Current students working in the UTC Olfaction Lab, have been exploring relationships among individuals' resilience, stress, and olfactory sensitivity. They

have demonstrated that sense of smell diminishes when someone is experiencing depression and improves when the depression lifts. They have also shown that those who are most resilient have the best sense of smell.

To further study depression and olfaction Dr. Ozbek needed to measure a biomarker in participants' blood. But an unforeseen problem arose when she realized that despite incentivizing participation with gift certificates those low in resilience and/or higher in depressive mood did not provide a blood sample. Dr. Ozbek did not give up on her question, though. She soon realized that the biomarker she was looking to measure from blood could be measured from sweat instead. She and her students are currently in the conducting the study with this new collection approach and they are optimistic!

Dr. Ozbek says, "I love learning and I love psychology." She has invested in many cohorts of UTC students and her contributions to the greater field of psychology can be felt across many areas of the discipline. The next time you see Dr. Ozbek, please thank her for her time and commitment to UTC and all of its students!



Meet Our Psychology Majors



Alyssa Melendez came to Chattanooga from Fairview, Tennessee. Though originally planning to pursue a career in Early Childhood and Family Studies, Dr. Watson's Intro to Psychology course changed her mind. She quickly became immersed - taking advantage of opportunities such as studying abroad in New Zealand for six weeks and starting research with Dr. Zelin concerning male on male sexual violence.

Following Alyssa's graduation in May 2020, she plans to take a gap year in order to continue doing research, narrow to a graduate school program, and travel. Her current plan is to pursue a career in clinical psychology. Alyssa believes the Department of Psychology stands out from other departments with its special group of professors who are always willing to help students succeed however they can!

Alyssa's Best Advice?
Take advantage of the resources not only within the department, but at UTC in general, too. Utilize your professors. They're all amazing and genuinely WANT to help you. Go to their office and talk with them.



Kyle Sudduth is from Knoxville, Tennessee. Before coming to UTC, he studied hotel, restaurant, and tourism management and culinary arts. "It's good to make money but not too good for your soul," he says. When he made it to Chattanooga, Kyle chose to focus on psychology and philosophy. Though previous experience mentoring high schoolers created an interest in school counseling, his experience in the restaurant industry encouraged him to switch gears and explore I-O psychology.

Kyle's favorite part of the Psychology Department is how open the professors are to talking to students and helping them make connections. "They're all so helpful and so knowledgeable." He will graduate at the end of the summer in 2020 and isn't quite sure what is next, but graduate school is definitely on the table!

Kyle's Best Advice?
Take as many different classes in subjects that interest you as you can. Also, go visit one of the career counselors in the Counseling Center; they can really help you figure out who you are and what you can do!

Understanding the Planning Fallacy

Have you ever caught yourself thinking a task will take you no time, and it ends up requiring much more than you thought? **Psychology can explain that!** This is a classic cognitive bias called the planning fallacy. When people fall victim to this bias, they tend to be overly optimistic in their estimates about how long it will take to complete a task - like studying a particular set of concepts for an upcoming exam.

Accurately thinking about the amount of time necessary for academic projects will lead to better planning and execution. Your best work will result from having enough time to devote to each step, and you can avoid the stress of working under a time crunch. Next time, consider how long similar tasks have taken in the past, and don't plan for best-case scenarios! Consider anything that might not go according to plan.



Test Yo-self to Know Yo-self!

Have you ever spent hours reading the chapters in your textbook and reviewing your notes and STILL failed your exam? **Psychology can explain that!** Active studying involves more than simply looking over the material a few times. One of the most effective ways to retain information is through self-testing. When you self-test, you retrieve information that you have been studying. Every time you engage in retrieval your memory for that material becomes strengthened.

If you didn't know about the value of self-testing, you might be tempted to "go over" your notes without really thinking about them. Instead, while studying stop and check your progress by testing your knowledge. If the result of your testing suggests that you are having trouble, alter your studying plan accordingly!

Great Things Are Happening!

Dr. Kristen Black received a Faculty Pre-Tenure Enhancement Program (PREP) grant in the amount of \$13,035 for her study entitled “Examining Stress as a Badge of Honor among Full-Time Employees”! The award includes funds for a student research assistant, participant incentives, and CARMA training in advanced statistical techniques.

Congratulations, Dr. Black!



Dr. Kristen Black and Dr. Christopher Cunningham organized UTC’s participation in the International Conference on Work, Stress, and Health. This bi-annual conference is managed by the American Psychological Association, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, and the Society for Occupational Health Psychology. Dr. Cunningham and Dr. Black were collectively involved as presenters or directors of more than 15 separate research and/or administrative sessions during the conference!



The Au-some Mocs raised over \$7,000 for the Chattanooga Autism Center this year! This contributed 10% of the total funds raised. These funds will be used to provide support, services, and advocacy for individuals on the autism spectrum of all ages and abilities. Congratulations, Au-some Mocs!

The View from Room 382

It’s hard to believe that the end of the semester is here. It seems like only yesterday we were in sweltering heat and are now concerned about surviving the “polar vortex.” As always, things keep chugging along in the UTC Department of Psychology and change is the order of the day. Enrollment in the Department continues to climb, with almost 700 undergraduate majors (up over 14% from Fall 2018) and 48 graduate students. We entered the semester welcoming four new faculty – Dr. Ashley Howell, Dr. Julie Madden, Dr. Hannah Osborn and Dr. Danielle Graham – all of whom have done an outstanding job!



In the middle of the semester, Dr. Amanda Clark accepted the position of Assistant Dean in the College of Arts & Sciences (congratulations Amanda!). And, as the semester ends, we are beginning two searches for tenure-track assistant professors, one in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, and the other in Applied Gerontology, which will help us continue our tradition of excellence in teaching, research and service. Great things are, indeed, happening in the UTC Department of Psychology – and there is more to come!

As we enter the busy holiday season, we all have much for which to be thankful. As in years past, I want to thank our outstanding faculty and staff for their unwavering support for and commitment to our students. Our fabulous office staff, Allison Stone, Judy Gallagher, and work-study student, Savannah Hodge, keep the wheels of progress turning smoothly. Angelique Cook, the best academic advisor on campus, continues to go the extra mile to ensure our majors know how to navigate their way through their academic journey. Finally, our amazing full- and part-time faculty demonstrate their commitment to the advancement of knowledge and the intellectual development of their students on a daily basis.

We also want to recognize our students. We know there are lots of other schools and majors out there and we appreciate you choosing to join us to advance your education and thank you for the many contributions you make to the department, the university and the surrounding community.

Finally, congratulations to all of our December graduates! Thank you for letting us be a part of your lives and we wish you well in the future! To our returning students – we’ll see you in January! And to all, I wish you and your families peace and happiness in the holiday season!

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