

# **48<sup>th</sup> Annual Honors Award Program**

**Department of Psychological  
Science**



**Central Connecticut State  
University**

**May 2021**

# Program of Events

Many of the awards in this program have video or audio remarks linked to them (in addition to written remarks). These include remarks immediately below from the department chair, the CCSU president, and this year's valedictorian and salutatorian. There are many links on the pages that follow. Please click the links to hear more from faculty and students about the achievements of the awardees.

A special section this year is a memorial to Dr. Steven Horowitz with remarks from students, faculty, and his family.

[Welcome](#)

Dr. Carolyn Fallahi, Chair

[Welcome Remarks](#)

Dr. Zulma Toro  
President of CCSU

[Valedictory Address](#)

Megyn Jasman

[Salutatorian Address](#)

Tess Atkinson

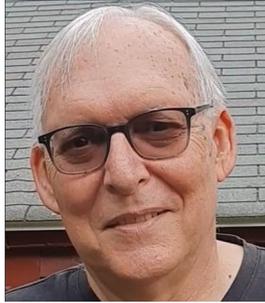
Memorial to Dr. Steven Horowitz

Departmental Honors

Faculty Award

Psi Chi Initiation

## Memorial to Dr. Steven Horowitz



During the 2020-2021 academic year we lost a dear colleague and admired teacher, Dr. Steven Horowitz. We miss him very much and remarks are offered members of Dr. Horowitz's family and department colleagues. Students prepared a touching slideshow.

### Remarks from Dr. Horowitz's Family:

[Adrienne Benjamin](#)

[Matthew Benjamin Horowitz](#)

### [Student Slideshow Tribute to Dr. Horowitz](#)

***Presented by the Psychology Club, Psi Chi, and Psychological Science Majors***

Dr. Horowitz was a great professor, who inspired many of his students in the Department of Psychological Science. The CCSU Psychology Club and CCSU's Psi Chi chapter have collaborated to memorialize Dr. Horowitz and the positive impact he had on his students. As a gift from the students in the Department of Psychological Science, several psychology students and alumni have shared their nice comments and memories of Dr. Horowitz which can be shared with you all as we remember him during our annual Honors Night.

### Faculty Tribute to Dr. Horowitz

Remarks by:

[Dr. Carolyn Fallahi, Department Chair](#)

[Dr. Doug Engwall, Friend and Colleague](#)

At the end of the Fall 2020 semester, Dr. Steven Horowitz passed away. A member of the Department of Psychological Science since 1991, he taught Research Methods every

semester (among other classes), asking his students to do calculations by hand to ensure that they understood the concepts! “Students admired Dr. Horowitz’s passion and dedication for teaching, as well as his sense of humor that always made students and faculty members laugh” (Psychology Club, 2020). A recurrent member of the Student Faculty Collaboration Committee, he was dedicated to helping students present their research in different forums, including the Eastern Psychological Association and Psychology Day. He never missed a Psychology Day conference or Psychology Honor’s Night (Bowman, 2020).

Always trying to make things fun, Dr. Laura Bowman (2020) joked that in their contests at the end-of-the-semester to see who would finish grading the research method’s papers first, he always lost! His students talked about the little things that he would do that would bring a smile to their faces. In one memory, one of our students was upset about spending her 21st birthday alone and socially distanced because of the pandemic. Dr. Horowitz played happy birthday to her on his accordion during a WebEx meeting (Jasman, 2020).

Dr. Horowitz always encouraged his students to reach beyond their comfort level. In one story by a student, she writes, “I will never forget that despite my stuttering and shaking during my research proposal presentation, Dr. Horowitz commended me for presenting.” Students received a rubric after the presentation and he wrote, “the old man in the back had trouble hearing you, great job” (Finkle, 2020)! But it wasn’t just students that he helped. Many faculty talked about working on interesting projects with him. Newer faculty were always grateful for his help with ideas about teaching and materials (Waite & Corbera, 2020). And other faculty were grateful for his reassurance that allowing a teenage son to play video games would not lead to lasting ruin (Andreolletti, 2020). It was always fun to visit Dr. Horowitz in the dungeon of Barnard Hall, where he would pull out some of the coolest experimental contraptions that he had stashed over the years (Disch, 2020).

Dr. Horowitz didn’t just give of his time and talent to Central Connecticut State University, but also to the city of New Britain, serving on the New Britain Board of Education and his commitment to serving in the New Britain Community (DiPlacido, 2020). Dr. Horowitz also kept the entire department in line. Serving as our Parliamentarian for many years, we all turned to him when things got rambunctious to figure out if the process was kosher. No one knew Robert’s Rules as well as he did (Conway, 2020)! He had no trouble keeping us all in-line and when necessary, slipping out a zinger at those meetings when things were tough (Fallahi, 2020)! Just when we were all taking ourselves too seriously, Dr. Horowitz would break the ice with one of his one-liners and we would all just crack up.

It is so difficult to comprehend that we will no longer see Dr. Horowitz’s smiling face in the halls of Marcus White any longer. But we are ALL better for having known him.

## Departmental Honors

### Julianna Vass

*Presented by Dr. Caleb Bragg*

I am writing on behalf of **Julianna Vass** as a recipient for Departmental Honors. Julianna has routinely and habitually demonstrated a keen academic mind and tireless work ethic. If that were not enough to set her apart, she also shows burgeoning leadership qualities in serving her fellow undergraduate students. There are many, many opportunities to get involved and serve other undergraduate students here at CCSU, and it feels like Julianna has done them all! She has been active in Psych Club and Psi Chi, a Psych Peer Tutor for 3 years, the Psych Peer Tutor Intern, and a Co-Lead Psych Peer Tutor. This last is particularly noteworthy as she took on a lead role in transitioning our tutoring service from on-ground to on-line in a matter of weeks when we were forced online due to the COVID-19 Global Pandemic. Julianna learned how to use WebEx and Teams well enough to then train the other tutors on using those platforms to hold one-on-one tutoring sessions while remotely accessing the software needed to help the tutees complete course requirements. I cannot fully state how essential Julianna's service has been to hundreds of her fellow undergraduate students during this generationally defining global pandemic. She is a deserving candidate.

## Graduate Student Academic Award

### Kevin Rodriguez

*Presented by Dr. Marisa Mealy*

The Graduate Student Academic Award is granted to one outstanding graduate student in the Department of Psychological Science. **Kevin M. Rodriguez** is clearly deserving of this award. As a graduate student, he maintained a graduate GPA of 4.0 (which is no small feat). He completed his internship with the Connecticut After School Network, where he was highly regarded. Kevin was also extensively involved in research. With one research team, he was the first author on two talks. One peer-reviewed talk, Stereotype threat, academic risk, and retention among Latinos, was given at the annual Eastern Psychological Association (EPA) conference. A second talk, Latino stereotype beliefs in a university setting, was given at the Living in Las Americas: Migration and Communities Conference. In addition to this, he was an author on a peer-reviewed poster, Understanding stereotypes of Latinos: a multiethnic perspective, which was also presented at EPA. With a second research team he authored a peer-reviewed publication entitled "Experiential and active learning: Graduate psychology student's perspective and reflection" which was published in 2021 in Systematic Reflection. During his time in graduate school, he also worked with the Center for International Education, assisted with a needs assessment for the Center for Public Policy and Social Research, and was employed as a grant writer for the Connecticut After School Network. In addition to his academic and professional work, Kevin

completed a high-quality thesis on the “Effects of national identity on test performance: stereotype lift vs. threat,” for which he collected data from approximately 328 participants within the space of only one semester. Kevin possesses an extraordinary work ethic that stands out to all those who know him.

## **Henry Barnard Distinguished Student Award**

**Megyn Jasman**

***Presented by Dr. Joanne DiPlacido***

The Psychological Science Department is extremely pleased to honor **Megyn Jasman** as a Barnard Scholar. Megyn is one of those rare students who has excelled academically, in her scholarship, service and leadership. She embodies all of the characteristics worthy of the Henry Barnard Scholar Award. In addition to her outstanding GPA, she has shown exceptional leadership, as a peer tutor and this past year as a co-lead tutor. She has been committed to the Psychology Student Club, serving as Public Relations Officer and President. She has been a Student Faculty Liaison for Psi Chi the National Honor Society for Psychological Science. She has won numerous academic awards, including an Outstanding Research Award in our department. She has presented two research studies at the Eastern Psychological Association Annual Conference and will be presenting her current research to this year’s American Psychological Association Conference and is revising the manuscript for this research for publication.

## **The Brittany Mariani, Rich Royster, and Matthew Piedescalzo Award for a Promising New Undergraduate in Psychology**

**Cedric Westcott**

***Presented by Dr. Jason Sikorski***

Cedric is a Psychological Science major at Central Connecticut State University. He is thoughtful and curious student who enjoys analyzing problems from multiple angles with a keen eye for critical thinking and meta-cognition. Cedric is a culturally competent social justice warrior who routinely volunteers his time in the community. He is passionate about acting in theater productions and teaching sailing to youth. Cedric looks forward to helping children, adolescents and adults reach their full potential through the implementation of psychological principles.

**Jessica Casamassa**

***Presented by Dr. Jason Sikorski***

Jessica is peer tutor within the Department of Psychological Science at CCSU. She is an active member of the Psychology Club and the Psi Chi International Honors Society in Psychology. She has won multiple merit scholarships in high school and college. She has

volunteered her time and energy over many years to assist the *Relay for Life* program. Jessica will be pursuing research, work and volunteer opportunities in the coming years and looks forward to attending graduate school in Clinical Psychology.

## **Rich Royster and Brittany Mariani Endowed Scholarship Awards**

**Zhane Kelly  
Caitlin Murphy  
Francesca Palmer**

**Yuliya Polichshuk  
Liliana Villar**

## **Academic Excellence Awards**

<b>Lejla</b>	<b>Abidovic</b>	<b>Emily</b>	<b>Morrissey</b>
<b>Megan</b>	<b>Appleton</b>	<b>Sarah</b>	<b>Olsen</b>
<b>Emily</b>	<b>Aston</b>	<b>Trinity</b>	<b>Pelloni</b>
<b>Tess</b>	<b>Atkinson</b>	<b>Erin</b>	<b>Pfeifer</b>
<b>Acadia</b>	<b>Berry</b>	<b>Michaela</b>	<b>Pontacoloni</b>
<b>Laura</b>	<b>Bretel Saavedra</b>	<b>William</b>	<b>Provancher</b>
<b>Katelyn</b>	<b>Byrne</b>	<b>Theodore</b>	<b>Rainville</b>
<b>Rhiannya</b>	<b>Byrne</b>	<b>Misty</b>	<b>Riquier</b>
<b>Shane</b>	<b>Callender</b>	<b>Stephen</b>	<b>Scougall</b>
<b>Amy</b>	<b>Collier</b>	<b>Juliana</b>	<b>Servetnick</b>
<b>Samantha-Jo</b>	<b>Eberl</b>	<b>Livia</b>	<b>Silva</b>
<b>Anna</b>	<b>Finkle</b>	<b>Meaghan</b>	<b>Soboleski</b>
<b>Sarah</b>	<b>Goodell</b>	<b>Paige</b>	<b>Spiewak</b>
<b>Megyn</b>	<b>Jasman</b>	<b>Momina</b>	<b>Tallal</b>
<b>Kyleen</b>	<b>Kobrzycki</b>	<b>Kristina</b>	<b>Taylor</b>
<b>Angela</b>	<b>Koerber</b>	<b>Michaela</b>	<b>Tripputi</b>
<b>Taylor</b>	<b>Marino</b>	<b>Julianna</b>	<b>Vass</b>
<b>Lesley</b>	<b>Martinez</b>	<b>Lucyannie</b>	<b>Velazquez</b>
<b>Adam</b>	<b>Martino</b>	<b>Grecia</b>	<b>Zaldivar</b>

## Eastern Psychological Association Conference Accepted Presenters

*Presented by the Psychology Club and the Department of Psychological Science*

The Department of Psychological Science would like to acknowledge students who were accepted to present at the Eastern Psychological Association's Annual Conference. These individuals took the initiative to pursue research in addition to their courses. They have each gone above and beyond the expectations of an undergraduate student. Their dedication to exploring their interests and challenging themselves has in turn enriched their personal college experience. We hope that each of these individuals take this time to reflect on the lessons they have taken away from completing research. We hope that it has inspired them to continue to be research producers in their futures. Thank you to all of the professors that have provided these students with the opportunity to immerse themselves in the process of research. This extra step has allowed these students to deepen their own knowledge and passion for Psychological Science.

We would like to acknowledge the following students:

**Lejla**  
**Tess**

**Abidovic**  
**Atkinson**

**Alexandra Scatena**  
**Julianna Vass**

### **Outstanding Research**

#### **Traditional and Social Media Consumption, Post-Traumatic Stress and Anxiety during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

*Presented by Dr. Bradley Waite*

#### **Liliana Villar**

**Liliana Villar** quickly assessed the COVID-19 pandemic and recognized it as a public health emergency. She became interested in potential mental health consequences. She began researching traditional and social media consumption, post-traumatic stress and anxiety during the pandemic as a class project and continued her work this year. She did an outstanding job with the study, which has been peer reviewed and accepted for national presentation at the 2021 Association for Psychological Science Virtual Convention.

[Carissa Daigle](#)  
[Hannah Rodrigues](#)

*Presented by Dr. Carolyn Fallahi*

This year my research team has been examining the psychological effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Two students have been integral to our process, **Hannah Rodrigues** and **Carissa Daigle**. Both managed data bases for different studies, spent hours running statistics, and contributed wherever I needed them. Their contributions have been monumental and tonight I would like to recognize them for their efforts.

[Julianna Vass](#)

*Presented by Dr. Julia Blau*

Julianna Vass took the initiative to continue her work from Research Methods. Her study “The effect of enthusiasm vs. expertise on working memory” was an extraordinarily well-crafted investigation of the effect of soccer knowledge vs. enthusiasm for soccer on the ability to remember soccer-related words presented from a list. She was solely responsible for all data collection and presented her results at the Eastern Psychological Association virtual conference this year. Julianna has a keen mind for methodology and this honor is well-deserved.

[Lejla Abidovic](#)

*Presented by Dr. Jason Sikorski*

For the last year, **Lejla Abidovic** has been a member of Dr. Jason Sikorski’s Toxic Masculinity Research Team. Lejla was accepted to present her research entitled ‘Multiple informant reports of toxic masculinity in men’ at the annual Eastern Psychological Association Conference held virtually in March of 2021. Lejla has also worked as a Psychological Science Peer Tutor and interned through both the Hartford Public Schools and Wayside Youth and Family Support Network. Lejla is kind, empathetic and mindful. Lejla was accepted to multiple graduate programs but will be attending classes through the Marriage and Family Therapy Graduate Program at the University of Saint Joseph starting in the Fall of 2021.

[Tess Atkinson](#)

*Presented by Dr. Jason Sikorski*

Dr. Sikorski collected data from about 800 CCSU students to gather information about the health and wellness of college students. Tess reviewed relevant literature and analyzed the data. She was accepted to present her work entitled ‘Mental health correlates of Irritable Bowel Syndrome in Women’ at the annual Eastern Psychological Association Conference held virtually in March of 2021. In fact, Tess was named one of only a few winners of the Psi Chi Regional Research Award at the conference. She is the

2021 Salutatorian for the Department of Psychological Science at Central Connecticut State University. Tess also works at the CCSU Women's Center and is a team leader on the Division 1 Women's Soccer Team at Central Connecticut State University. Tess is currently attending graduate school in Psychology within the Department of Psychological Science at Central Connecticut State University.

### [Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Lab](#)

*Presented by Dr. Silvia Corbera-Lopez*

**Olivia Knight**

**Sara N. Manuele**

**Jason T. Szalaty**

**Liliana M. Villar**

**Syeda S. Zaidi**

I am very proud to nominate the members of the Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience Lab (SCAN-LAB) for the Outstanding Research Award. During this past year, the SCAN-LAB members have tirelessly worked on developing new materials, putting together scoring systems and developing guidelines for the SCAN-LAB that will be used for the next years with several research projects.

**Liliana M. Villar** has shown incredible motivation and wonderful research skills and has worked wonderfully in several projects in the SCAN-LAB. She has worked on the development of a study that will examine social cognition, and in addition, she has assisted on a study that is currently being conducted with Dr. Corbera Lopez and Dr. Marín-Chollom, that examines the influence of locus of control and health control, anxiety and distress on behaviors related to preventing and coping with COVID and the moderating role of prosocial behaviors. She has also shown her presenting skills by presenting at the lab the outcomes of her own scientific literature search.

In addition, Liliana developed her own project with Dr. Corbera Lopez mentorship, which received the **2020-2021 Faculty Student Research Grant**. Liliana showed incredible research skills by writing a research grand and creating a new protocol. This project is currently being conducted and aims at studying the relationship between self-esteem and autism spectrum disorder traits.

**Sara N, Manuele and Jason T. Szalaty** have shown incredible motivation and hard work at assisting the SCAN-LAB to create new scoring systems, developing guidelines and exploring potential research paradigms and measures for the SCAN-LAB to use in the next incoming years of research, in addition to conduct literature searches and presented at the SCAN-LAB.

**Syeda S. Zaidi and Olivia Knight** have been remarkable SCAN-LAB volunteers and have shown their incredible motivation at learning about Social Cognitive and Affective

Neuroscience, and have conducted wonderful literature searches and presented at the SCAN-LAB their outcomes of their own review on a scientific psychological topic.

I could not have had a more hard-working and motivated team at the SCAN-LAB. Their work has made the SCAN-LAB grow. Thank you so much for your work!!

### [Kathleen \(Kat\) Kelly](#)

*Presented by Dr. Joanne DiPlacido*

Kathleen (Kat) Kelly is graduating from our MA program in Health Psychology. Kat's passion has been women's health. While an intern at the Sexual Assault Crisis Service in New Britain, she became a sexual assault crisis counselor. Expanding on women's health Kat conducted an ambitious thesis on "Feminism and Body Image: The Role of Empowerment" among adult women finding support for her hypotheses. She plans on revising her thesis to submit to a national conference and getting it published.

## **Shanette Washington Distinguished Service to the Department Award**

### [Psychology Club Executive Board](#)

*Presented by Dr. Silvia Corbera*

**Rhiannya G. Byrne**

**Megyn H. Jasman**

**Courtney Keane**

**Madison K. Oquendo**

**Adrienne M. Scott**

**Liliana M. Villar**

I am honored and delighted to nominate the Psychology Club Executive Board members for the Outstanding Service Award. As the Psychology Club advisor, I am very proud to have had the opportunity to work with this amazing executive board. Thank you so much! I am very proud of you.

These students have worked relentlessly to provide an amazing program and provide amazing support to the Psychology majors, and hence to the Department of Psychological Science and to CCSU. They have devoted hours of important service work. This year has been challenging to adapt all the activities to an online environment and the Psychology Club executive board has worked beyond expectations providing an incredible year of activities, events and support to the students.

These devoted, hard-working and professional members of the Executive Board have shown through the whole semester their complete commitment to the responsibilities in Psychology Club. Even though this year all the events were conducted online, the Psychology Club Executive Board has raised to the occasion, without any doubt.

This Psychology Club executive board has worked hard to make great amazing events and activities possible for Psychology Major students. Just to name a few, the Psychology Club eboard assisted Psychology Majors on the process to apply to receive funds to attend the 2021 Virtual Eastern Psychological Association (EPA) conference, they invited Professors as speakers to their online meetings, and organized relevant online workshops for Psychology Majors such as a “GRE and Grad School Application Workshop”. Your work has been beyond remarkable. Thank you!

### **Psi Chi Officer Team**

*Presented by Dr. Amanda Marin-Chollom*

**Julianna Vass, President**

**Anna Finkle, Vice President (graduated Fall 2020)**

**Alexandra Scatena, Webmaster**

**Emily O'Connor, Secretary,**

**Liliana Villar, Student Faculty Liaison**

**Tori Wallington, Treasurer**

**Teddy Rainville, Public Relations**

This 2020-2021 the Psi Chi Executive Board has been busy despite being in the middle of a pandemic and maintaining their high GPAs! They continued to provide the department with a monthly newsletter, *Central Psychology News*, and provide training opportunities by collaborating with the Habitat for Humanity. They were also able to continue their support for the Alzheimer’s Association by participating virtually in the Walk to End Alzheimer’s. Lastly, they were successful in their t-shirt fundraiser. Some of these funds will be used to purchase and plant a tree in memory of Dr. Steven Horowitz. Congratulations to our Psi Chi Executive Board!

## **Psychological Science Peer Tutors**

*Presented by Dr. Caleb Bragg*

<b>Julianna Vass</b>	<b>Ashley Dana</b>
<b>Megyn Jasman</b>	<b>Jessica Casamassa</b>
<b>Carissa Daigle</b>	<b>Olivia Christiano</b>
<b>John Lux</b>	<b>Momina Tallal</b>
<b>Liliana Villar</b>	<b>Yuliya Polichshuk</b>
<b>Courtney Keane</b>	<b>Alexandra Scatena</b>
<b>Angela Koerber</b>	<b>Alexa Meres</b>
<b>Madeline Christensen</b>	

Being a peer tutor is an under-thanked, under-appreciated, yet invaluable service to Psychology Students everywhere at CCSU. These peer tutors have taken it upon themselves, without any expectation of reward or recognition, to hone their skills in data analysis and research design, and passed that knowledge on to their fellow undergraduate students, and even the occasional graduate student! The following direct quote from a former student of mine exemplifies the dedication and importance of these peer tutors: "I never would have passed research methods without the peer tutors. [Peer tutors] never got annoyed or frustrated with me, always helped me stick with until I got it. I am so grateful, because of [peer tutors] I can graduate!"

## **Faculty Award**

**Dr. Jason Sikorski**

***Presented by the Psychology Club***

Each year, the CCSU Psychology Club recognizes one professor in the Department of Psychological Science for the Professor of the Year Award. The students in the Department of Psychological Science assist in nominating a professor in which they believe deserves this recognition. On behalf of the CCSU Psychological Science students, we would like to congratulate Dr. Jason Sikorski for the 2020-2021 faculty award.

Dr. Sikorski is a passionate teacher of psychology. Through teaching several courses in Abnormal Psychology, Research Methods, Life-Span Development, and more, Dr. Sikorski has continued to inspire his students. Dr. Sikorski provides a space for his students to grow as critical thinkers in psychology, motivating them to be the best students they can be through stimulating coursework. Dr. Sikorski, or how his students call him, Dr. J, is dedicated to his student's success. He is always willing to meet any students in office hours to discuss classwork, internship/work opportunities, graduation plans, or if students just need someone to talk to. Whatever the reason, Dr. Sikorski is there for his students. It is the students who Dr. Sikorski inspire everyday who nominated him for this prestigious award. On behalf of the CCSU Psychological Science students, thank you Dr. Sikorski for your passion for teaching psychology and serving the students in department. It is because of professors like you that students have the space to explore their interests in psychology and be the best students they can be.

## **Psi Chi Initiation**

***Presented by:* Dr. Amanda Marin-Chollom, Psi Chi Faculty Advisor, and Julianna Vass, Psi Chi President**

**Rhiannya Byrne**

**Courtney Keane**

**Gregory Kendall**

**Rachel Curcio**

**Carissa Daigle**

**Zachary Forte**

**Taya Gwizd**

**Jhoselyn Jara**

**Michaela Pontacoloni**

**Alexandra Scatena**

**Liliana Villar**

**Acadia Berry**

**Amy Collier**

**Paige Spiewak**

**Jessica Casamassa**

**Olivia Christiano**

**Mickayla Diffley**

**Sarah Gianetti**

**Julie Gifford**

**Alexa Meres**

**Trinity Pelloni**

**Kevin Rodriguez Oblitas**

**Meaghan Soboleski**