I am delighted to let you know that the School of Psychology has been ranked in the Top 100 Psychology schools internationally (and in the top 35 in Europe) by the prestigious Times Higher Education rankings. Given the financial constraints that the University experiences, this level of performance is testament to the outstanding work and commitment by the academic staff, with the invaluable support of the administration and technical staff. I am very proud that the School’s continued success is due to the academic excellence, dedication, commitment and creativity of the staff and our students. The current issue highlights some of our notable successes in the past 12 months.

Professor Paul Dockree received an Irish Research Council (IRC) Consolidator Laureate Award, which supports exceptional researchers in conducting frontier basic research that pushes the boundaries of our current knowledge. Professor Rhodri Cusack was awarded an EU European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant – this highly prestigious and competitive award allows outstanding researchers to pursue ground-breaking research.

Staff have been recognised nationally for their outstanding contributions to Psychology. Dr Rita Honan received an Outstanding Contribution to the Profession Award from the Psychological Society of Ireland. In addition, Professor Ian Robertson was presented with the Certificate of Excellence to mark his significant contribution to Trinity’s Global Engagement activities. The GBHI under Ian’s direction continues to create an international network of leaders in brain health; this newsletter highlights an innovative three-year research programme co-led by Dr Lorina Naci, which aims to detect early features of the risk of getting Alzheimer’s disease in people with no symptoms of the disease.

In the past year, the School has developed an e-mental health research group led by Professor Derek Richards and Professor Ladislav Timulak to conduct cutting-edge research on the effectiveness of internet interventions for common mental health problems.

We thank you for your continued involvement and hope that you will enjoy learning about the recent developments at the School outlined in this newsletter. We want you to feel part of the School’s community, and we warmly welcome your contributions, suggestions and input. The School’s website and twitter feed provide more detail on the latest news on our activities.
Paul Dockree Receives Irish Research Council Laureate Award

In March, Paul Dockree, Associate Professor at the School, received an Irish Research Council (IRC) Consolidator Laureate Award for the project ICSISA on Cortical and Subcortical Interactions during Sustained Attention. He was one of the thirteen researchers from Trinity College among the 36 successful applicants of the IRC Laureate Awards programme announced. The Laureate Awards programme was introduced for the first time this year and has been put in place to support exceptional researchers in conducting frontier basic research that pushes the boundaries of our current knowledge. It applies to all disciplines beyond postdoctoral level at the early and mid-stages of researchers’ careers.

European Research Council Awards €3 Million to Rhodri Cusack

The Thomas Mitchell Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience, Rhodri Cusack has been awarded an EU European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant valued at €3 million. These highly prestigious awards allow exceptional researchers to pursue ground-breaking research. This is the seventh ERC Advanced Grant award to Trinity College Dublin, out of a total of 14 ERC Advanced Grants to Ireland.

The award will see Professor Cusack and his team at the Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN) conduct a world-leading research project that will for the first time use neuroimaging to measure the hidden changes in mental representations during infancy and compare them to predictions from deep neural networks, the technology that has been responsible for recent dramatic advances in artificial intelligence. He will investigate the importance of pre-training, the learning that doesn’t manifest in behaviour until much later. Professor Cusack’s efforts to understand how pre-training during infancy shapes neural representations could revolutionise developmental neuroscience, lead to new advances in artificial intelligence, and help us understand why brain injury in infants sometimes affects mental development, but sometimes does not.
New Study Hopes to Identify Early Signs of Dementia

A new three-year research programme called Prevent aims to detect early features of the risk of getting Alzheimer’s disease in people with no symptoms of the disease. The study is being carried out by researchers at the Global Brain Health Institute (GBHI) at Trinity, in collaboration with Cambridge, Oxford, Edinburgh universities, Imperial College London in the UK and the INSERM Neuroscience, in France. In total 700 participants will be involved in Prevent. It is the first large-scale international research project which seeks to understand the disease process in people with no signs of dementia, decades before Alzheimer’s disease may develop.

The scientists are looking for subtle, early changes in the neurological, cognitive and brain health of individuals who have no symptoms, but are at risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease. Tests will also be carried out on individuals who have a lower risk of developing the disease based on family history.

Dr Lorina Naci, L’Oréal-Unesco for Women in Science International Rising Talents, Assistant Professor of Psychology, Trinity and GBHI Faculty, and Co-Principal Investigator on the study said: ‘Intervening in mid-life could be game-changing as it provides a unique disease-altering window, before substantial damage has occurred. The population-wide early intervention programmes that will follow this study may treat and, ultimately, prevent Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of dementia.’

Staff Awarded for Excellence

Last year, Professor Ian Robertson was presented with the Certificate of Excellence to mark his significant contribution to Trinity’s Global Engagement activities.

Professor Robertson held the Chair in Psychology at Trinity College and was the founding director of Trinity College Institute of Neuroscience (TCIN).

Together with Professor Brian Lawlor, Conolly Norman Professor of Old Age Psychiatry, Professor Robertson, is Co-Director, of the Global Brain Health Institute, a joint partnership of Trinity College and University of California, San Francisco, which trains Atlantic Fellows for Equity in Brain Health.

Robertson’s focus on the human brain’s attention systems has led to a number of innovative ways to measure how humans pay - or fail to pay - attention. He has extended this research to help develop new therapeutic methods that have resulted in improved cognitive function in aging and other populations. This work on attention has also created an important new theory about how socio-economic factors, such as poor education and social deprivation, interact with the biology of the brain to increase the risk of dementia.

Outstanding Contribution to the Profession Award to Dr Rita Honan

Dr Rita Honan received an Outstanding Contribution to the Profession Award in November 2017 from the Psychological Society of Ireland’s Division of Counselling Psychology. The Doctorate in Counselling Psychology at Trinity thanks Rita for the significant developments she initiated on the course and for the profession of counselling psychology in Ireland.
The George and Maeve White Prize

The George and Maeve White Prize is awarded annually to a psychology student in Trinity College for a research based paper, which has been accepted for publication.

The prize was originally founded in 1999 in memory of Captain George White, aviator and psychologist, by a gift from his wife Maeve. The prize is now funded by a bequest made by the White family in memory of both their parents. George White graduated from TCD following a career in aviation and pursued a PhD in airline safety. Maeve White’s own intellectual pursuits lay in the fields of arts and philosophy. They both shared an avid interest in human psychology.

Newest Trinity Scholars Announced

The School of Psychology is proud to announce that we have two new Trinity Scholars in 2018. Naomi Vaida (Psychology Single Hons.) and Rowan Hamilton (TSM Economics and Psychology) were announced as the School’s newest Trinity Scholars on 9 April 2018, in Front Square.

This year there are 73 Scholars, 16 Fellows and two Honorary Fellows across the university.
Transforming Generalized Anxiety

Most current therapeutic approaches to treating generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) target worry and the experience of anxiety, which characterise this condition. The approach described in Transforming Generalized Anxiety: An Emotion-Focused Approach, the newest book by Professors Ladislav Timulak and James McElvaney, focuses on the deeper, underlying emotional experiences that clients worry about, are afraid of and want to avoid.

The book illustrates how these core painful experiences are transformed in therapy by generating experiences of self-compassion and healthy, boundary setting, protective anger. It shows how these experiences lead to natural grieving and the building of a sense of empowerment and inner confidence.

Transformation of underlying vulnerabilities, and the corresponding self-relating processes that contribute to those vulnerabilities, increases the client’s sense of emotional resilience and instils a belief, or trust, that painful emotional experiences and the processes that trigger them are bearable. This emotional resilience not only serves as a resource when encountering triggers of emotional vulnerability, but also decreases the client’s need to avoid hitherto feared triggers and the emotional experiences they bring.

Funding to Examine Developmental Outcomes of Infants with Neonatal Encephalopathy

The Neonatal Brain Injury Consortium Ireland, led by Professors Elizabeth Nixon and Jean Quigley along with Professor Eleanor Molloy from the School of Medicine, and colleagues from NUIG and UCC, received a five-year Health Research Board Collaborative Doctoral Award to examine the outcomes of brain injury in newborns. Neonatal brain injury is a common cause of mortality and disability and neonatal encephalopathy (NE) is the most common cause of brain injury in infants. For every baby that dies following NE, another will survive, sometimes with significant lifelong disability.

The overall goal of the Consortium is to enhance understanding of the causes, the prognosis and treatment of NE to improve the high morbidity and mortality associated with it. One of the projects undertaken by the Consortium will be housed in the School of Psychology and will focus on the neurodevelopmental, cognitive, linguistic and socio-emotional follow-up NE infants. A further focus of the study will be on the quality of real-time interactions between NE infants and their mothers and fathers to understand how infants initiate social interactions and how parents in turn respond to infant cues. Previous research conducted with premature infants has illustrated that these infants are more likely to be difficult to bring to attention and are more likely to become over-aroused. To date no research has considered parent-infant interactions within the context of NE. The proposed study, which will be conducted as part of ongoing work in the Infant and Child Research Laboratory, seeks to understand how parents interact with their NE infants and how quality of interaction influences developmental outcomes for the infants.
E-Mental Health Group Hosts Global Conference on Digital Mental Health

A major international conference on digital mental health and how internet interventions are being used for the management, diagnosis and prevention of mental health conditions, took place in Trinity College Dublin in April. The conference of the European Society for Research on Internet Intervention (ESRII) was hosted by the e-mental health research group at the School of Psychology together with SilverCloud Health. Over the two-day conference a vast range of topics were discussed: from online self-management for the diagnosis of bipolar disorder, interventions for the treatment of depression and anxiety disorders, interventions that target the distress associated with long-term conditions such as diabetes and coronary heart disease, among many more.

‘E-health and e-mental health has made major advances in the way technology is able to assist the treatment and management of a wide range of mental health and long-term conditions. These technologies are now making their way firmly into the healthcare, education and workplace environments,’ said Dr Derek Richards, the Trinity organiser of the conference and co-director of the e-mental health group at the School of Psychology at Trinity.

Dr Richards and Dr Ladislav Timulak, co-directors of the e-mental health research group at the School of Psychology believe that ‘the use of internet interventions offers a unique opportunity to use it as a means of support of mental health at a broader societal level.’ A significant research trial that is ongoing is the Digital Improving Access to Psychological Therapies trial that seeks to examine in real world service settings the overall effectiveness and cost effectiveness of internet-interventions for common mental health problems such as depression and anxiety disorders.

Technology Ireland Event

In April, Professor Sam Cromie, Director of the Centre for Innovative Human Systems (CIHS), shared his experience of understanding and changing systems and processes at a Technology Ireland event. Based in Trinity, the CIHS has collaborated with a range of national and international industries for the past 25 years. Its unique offering has focussed on bringing together a range of perspectives to develop a better way of describing, understanding and effectively changing these systems and processes. Psychology, Business and Organisation, Engineering and Computer Science, and Health Sciences all contribute to the work of the Centre.

The CIHS offers a range of training and education activities from an online Masters in Managing Risk & System Change to shorter Human Factors and Safety Management courses. The CIHS has a large network of research and industrial partners across aviation, healthcare, security, and other sectors including the likes of Airbus, Boeing, Pfizer and Statoil. The CIHS is a hub for education, training and consultancy services, building ever stronger collaborations with and building competence in industry. Please visit www.tcd.ie/cihs/ for more information.
Interview with Alumna – Muireann Irish

Associate Professor, School of Psychology and Brain & Mind Centre, The University of Sydney

1. What was your childhood ambition?
Growing up, I never had a clear career ambition aside from some rather grandiose aspirations of becoming a ballerina or a famous actress! I grew up in a house that placed a strong emphasis on learning and discovery as both of my parents were teachers, and while education was always highly valued there was never any pressure on me to pursue a particular career. My mother was a Science teacher and my Dad was an Art teacher and our bookcases were overflowing with beautiful collections on the human body, art, architecture, sculpture and history, as well as a set of intricately bound encyclopaedia that I regularly consulted. For my 11th birthday, I vividly remember my Dad presenting me with my own encyclopaedia which I adored – I instantly set about researching projects on any topic that interested me, ranging from space travel, to snakes, to Greek mythology.

2. What made you decide to study psychology in Trinity?
My uncertainty about my career persisted throughout secondary school, but in hindsight this enabled me to stay open about all possible pathways. When the time came to fill out my CAO form, I chose to study Medicine at Trinity. However, it was when my mother reminded me that I’m extremely squeamish and hate the sight of blood that I reconsidered! At the same time, my grandmother was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease and I desperately wanted to understand what was happening to her and how I could help. This cemented my decision to study psychology as I could keep my interests broad initially but also begin to explore the complexities of the human brain. Trinity was the obvious choice for me as my older brother was studying Engineering there and would regale me with stories of campus life. At that time, Trinity was the only University to offer a single Honours Psychology course, so I filled out the Change of Mind forms and hoped that I would secure a place. What began as a curiosity to discover led to me finding my calling as a scientist on a topic that I am truly passionate about.

3. What appeals to you most about your current role? What are you working on?
I am now an Associate Professor and director of the Memory and Imagination in Neurological Disorders (MIND) research group at the Brain and Mind Centre, University of Sydney. I currently supervise 6 PhD students and 1 Masters student, 1 full-time Research Assistant and 1 Postdoctoral Fellow, and I feel immensely proud that I have built a productive but extremely collegial research team. My research program seeks to explore the neurocognitive mechanisms of human memory by studying how episodic and semantic processes deteriorate in neurodegenerative disorders. Using a lesion model approach, in conjunction with structural and functional neuroimaging techniques, we explore uniquely human capacities including autobiographical memory, future thinking, and mind wandering. I can honestly say that I enjoy going in to work every day and being in charge of my own research agenda. I also get immense satisfaction from seeing my students going from strength to strength and becoming independent researchers in their own right.

4. What are your strongest memories of Trinity?
Trinity will always be a special place for me as I spent seven years there and lived on campus or in Halls for three of those years. I remember being in complete awe during my first lecture in the Ed Burke theatre, listening to Ray Fuller welcome us to his Introduction to Psychology course and feeling incredibly excited about what was to come. Long days spent studying in the gloomy alcoves of the Berkeley library were offset by summer evenings at the Pav, and of course the Trinity Ball and graduation are high on the list. But the strongest memories that I have of Trinity are of meeting my future husband when I was completing my PhD at TCIN. Due to space shortages, a cognitive neuroscientist and an organic chemist ended up sharing the same office – we have been married for seven years and have a beautiful son, Fionn, and another little boy on the way!

5. Have you any advice for students or fellow alumni?
The best piece of advice that I have received is simply to “Stop comparing yourself to others”. Everyone’s academic journey will be different and it can be extremely damaging to constantly hold yourself up for comparison to others. Instead, try to focus on what drew you to academia in the first place. For me, there is no other career quite like this. We get to actively pursue the topics that interest us and make a lasting contribution to the scientific literature, as well as be part of an international community all working towards the same goals. That is an immense privilege and worth the sacrifices along the way!

Muireann Irish, Associate Professor, School of Psychology and Brain & Mind Centre, The University of Sydney.
Schrödinger at 75: The Future of Biology

Trinity is organising a unique international meeting ‘Schrödinger at 75: The Future of Biology’ on 5-6 September 2018. In 1943, Erwin Schrödinger, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist, then Director of Theoretical Physics at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies (DIAS), gave three public lectures entitled ‘What is Life?’ at Trinity College Dublin. Following their publication as a book of the same name, these lectures had a tremendous influence on the development of molecular biology. We will mark the 75th anniversary of these lectures with an unprecedented gathering of some of the most brilliant minds working in biology today. Specific themes include systems biology, bioenergetics, brain and mind, memory, consciousness, ageing, human evolution, and artificial intelligence.

Tickets are €100. For more information and to book a ticket please visit www.tcd.ie/biosciences/whatislife/

Remember. The power of a legacy to Trinity

There’s an old saying that the true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade one does not expect to sit. When you leave a legacy to Trinity however big or small, you’re planting a tree which will grow to provide shelter to many. You’re empowering ground-breaking research which will benefit people in Ireland and all over the world. You’re supporting students from all backgrounds to access a Trinity education. You’re helping preserve our unique campus and heritage for new generations.

When you remember Trinity in your will, you join a tradition of giving that stretches back over 400 years – and reaches far into the future. For more information about leaving a Legacy to Trinity, please contact Carmen Leon.

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Get Involved

Trinity has a long tradition of outreach and community engagement. To find out about the numerous ways you can get involved with Trinity both at home and abroad, please visit www.tcd.ie/alumni/volunteer

Upcoming Alumni Events

Alumni Weekend
24-26 August 2018
Other Events
www.tcd.ie/alumni/news-events/events/

Class Notes

Do you have any news or updates that you’d like to share with your fellow alumni? Submit your news with an image, subject of study and year of graduation to alumni@tcd.ie. For more information please visit https://www.tcd.ie/alumni/news-events/publications/class-notes.php