

Psychology
Program

Spark to FLAME

Cultivating the Next Generation
of Human Science



DIGITAL PROGRAM GUIDE

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WELCOME TO SPARC 2026!

SPARC (Student Psychology Annual Research Conference) is a forum for honoring our work together. It is a place for honoring our questions and our discoveries.

At its heart, good research involves throwing light. It involves throwing light into the inchoate spaces of our experiences and our wonderings. The beauty, resonance, and clarity that this light throws off is, hopefully, of a continuing ring of brightness, and within that ring of light the hands that hold the insights are also lit. There is personal and communal transformation.

It is in this encounter with light that learning is birthed. The poet Jane Hirschfield put it nicely: “an oar moves a boat by entering what lies outside it”. Movement, like growth, involves a relationship and communion with an outside Other. Our research extends our inner curiosities into a world of others and their experiences. There, in that sacred collision, we change and are changed, moved by the encounter’s supporting buoyancy, and also, though challenging at times, by its useful resistance. This oscillation lies at the heart of all good work. It is its signature. To our students: thank you for courageously throwing light. We hope that your experience here at SPARC, and more broadly in our Psychology community, is one of continuing buoyancy between support and helpful resistance.

To our community: thank you for being a part of SPARC. We hope that every one of you enjoy, and benefit from, the substance and spirit of our work together. Also make sure to [click here to visit our website](#).

Overview of Program

- **Rooms #207 and #218 are presentation rooms** (Second Floor)
 - We will have 45 minutes for each session, with 2-3 presentations per session. There will be 10 minutes for questions/discussion and 5 minutes to rotate to next session.

11:00 AM: Lunch and Celebrations in Melson Lobby

12:00 PM: Presentations Begin

5:00 PM Awards

11:00 – 12:00

LUNCH AND CONVERSATION IN THE FOYER OF MELSON HALL

12:00-12:55

#207

#218

Cultural Context, Bias, & Equity in Psychology (Riona Harrigan)Ashleigh Rogers:*Beyond the Battlefield: Mental Health Disparities in Armed Forces Veterans*Jurnee Jackson: *Whose Psychology Is It? Rethinking Mental Health Beyond Eurocentric Frameworks*Jaden Jackson: *Invisible in the Exam Room: The Psychological Impact of Gender Bias in Healthcare***Digital Life, Media, and Identity (Malkam Kraft)**Drew Conrad:*Digital Electrodes and Everyday Scrolls: A Phenomenological View of Doom Scrolling*Lamis Lara:*Conditions of Worth in the Digital Home: How Family Vlogging Shapes Identity and Authenticity*Malia Pope:*From Woods to Screens: Imaginative Play, Digital Media, and Parental Mediation in Early Childhood*

1:00-1:55

SESSION 3 & 4

207

Trauma, Care, and Vulnerable Populations (Giancarlo Volpe)

Emma Wood:
Mental Health Treatment in Foster Youth

Malkam Kraft:
The Crucial Study of Child Abuse and Preventions

Victoria Taylor:
The Experience of Being a Caregiver

#218

Mental Health and Wellbeing (Charity Paschall)

Kyle DVonch:
The Importance of Studying Low Graduation Rates Among College Students with Bipolar Disorder

Khanh Hoang:
The Interpersonal Interaction of Co-workers and Supervisors to Employees Facing Mental Illness in the Workplace

Rayne Kolsrud:
Mental Health: The Impact on Creativity

2:00-2:55

SESSION 5 & 6

207

Relationships, Empathy, and Emotional Healing (Riona Harrigan)

Kelsie Gray:
Attachment Styles and Unhealthy Relationships

Emily Meyer:
Lived Experiences of Receiving Empathy

Mireille Bordeaux:
Omnipresence Journal

#218

Mind-Body and Therapeutic Approaches (Malkam Kraft)

Christian Crews:
Psychedelic-Assisted Play Therapy: A Theory on a Treatment for Major Depressive Disorder in Adults

Tamia Mack:
The Mind, the Body, and Coloring

Madison Jones:
It's All in Your Head: A Mixed Methods Study on the Bridge Between Phenomenology and Psychoneuroimmunology

3:00-3:55

SESSION 7 & 8

207

Depth Psychology, Meaning, and the Collective Psyche (Malkam Kraft)

Mack Allman:

The Modern Image Through Myths and Legends: How Our Stories Shape the Collective Psyche

Emma Houssain:

Humanistic Psychology and Symbolism

Rafael Oquendo:

Epilepsy and Spirituality

#218

Identity, Society, and Psychological Experience (Giancarlo Volpe)

Shelby Freeman:

A Dignity-Centered, Function-Based Intervention for Reducing Aggression and Enhancing Autonomy in Autism

Ariana Matias:

The Impact of ACEs on Attachment Styles and Psychological Wellbeing in Latinx Young Adults

Izabel Ferchaud:

Addiction in Homelessness: How Being Unhoused Increases Barriers to Receiving Healthcare and Addiction Treatment

4:00-4:55

SESSIONS 9 & 10

207

#218

**Psychological Growth and Well-Being
(Charity Paschall)**

Kelly Dearman:
Positive Psychology Interventions

Jay Fasone:
The Black Body and the Museum: The Leipzig 19, Provenance Research, and a Proposal for Recontextualizing Human Remains in Scientific Custody

Finding Diagnostic Meaning (Riona Harrigan)

Drew Conrad:
Wisdom in the Symptom: Jung and Hillman

Jonathan Bissette:
Identifying with Autism

5:00 PM – Awards and Celebrations!

Melson Lobby



ABSTRACTS

* Based on the alphabetical order of presenter

(Mack Allman) The Modern Image through Myths and Legends: How Our Stories Shape the Collective Psyche

Stories have been a major component to the human experience and society since we as humans have been able to communicate. Many of these stories tell warnings, experiences, or morals to all ages- reflecting a look into the collective psyche through them; Levi-Stauss and Jung's theories work with signs and symbols across cultures that reflect this. By looking into their work and applying their theories, psychologists and anthropologists can dig deeper into how our stories shape and reflect our societies. Many of these reflections are shown through common archetypes and binary oppositions, seen through studies from both Jung and Levi-Strauss.

(Drew Conrad) Digital Electrodes and Everyday Scrolls: A Phenomenological View of Doom Scrolling

Short-form video research often emphasizes clinical risk and measurable medical outcomes, but the experience itself gets flattened. This mixed methods study uses phenomenological interviews to understand doom scrolling as lived: how participants describe attention, mood, self-control, and meaning while caught in the feed. Six participants will complete a short intake (demographics, daily app time, wellbeing items) survey to contextualize narratives, followed by an in-depth phenomenological interview. I am also considering a short stream-of-consciousness audio diary to capture near-real-time experience. Because this behavior is structurally incentivized in platform economics, understanding its lived impacts is urgent.

(Jonathan Bissette) Identifying with Autism

As with most diagnoses of mental disorders, a diagnosis of autism can easily call someone's own individual identity into question. This leads an individual to construct their identity around this diagnosis in a way that makes sense to them. In this research paper, we examine five scholarly sources on neurodiversity, person-first and identity-first preferences, and the overall effects of these discussions, and how they relate to the construction of identity around autism. Overall, the results highlight the importance of autism in their identity and its strengths, leading to a positive outlook

(Drew Conrad) Wisdom in the Symptom: Jung and Hillman

Wisdom in the Symptom opens with a song ("Flowers Never Bend with the Rainfall") and the image of a door, then traces a breaking into a stance toward suffering: seeing before fixing. Symptoms are treated as soul-language, not glitches. Jung's move is to make psyche concrete by staying with images, building a container, and letting meaning unfold instead of forcing explanation. Hillman reframes wound as vision and symptoms as "gods" that rule attention. The talk culminates in ritual: give the symptom its due, rewrite Delphi as know and love thyself, and face tomorrow again without hatred, shame, or denial alone.

(Christian Crews) Psychedelic-Assisted Play Therapy: A Theory on a Treatment for Major Depressive Disorder in Adults

This thesis proposes a novel treatment for Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) in adults through a model of therapy known as Psychedelic-Assisted Play Therapy (PAPT). Throughout this theoretical thesis, the relevant literature is shown to make the case that a lack of playfulness and playful activity may have a role in the development of and/or contributes to the persistence of MDD in adults, and by reintroducing play into a depressed individual's life, it may combat the ailment and improve well-being. MDD has been shown to be associated with a hyperactive Default Mode Network (DMN), and it is proposed that the DMN itself has a role in the inhibition of playful impulses as an individual matures, alongside cultural influences. Psychedelic substances have the distinct function of reducing DMN activity and have been found to be very therapeutic as well as induce a number of psychological benefits in clinical settings. PAPT combines elements of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy and play therapy models to offer depressed individuals an opportunity to explore, reconnect with, and reintegrate playfulness into their adult lives as a way to reduce their depressive symptoms.

(Kyle DVonch) The Importance of Studying Low Graduation Rates Among College Students with Bipolar Disorder

On average, among college students that have bipolar disorder, the graduation rate is between 16-30%, which is incredibly concerning. As such, it is imperative that we, in an ethical manner, do research to find out how to raise the graduation rate among this demographic as well as define what bipolar disorder is and talk about how the side effects negatively impact college students. When done through a longitudinal approach, the possible study designs would include naturalistic observation, descriptive and correlational case studies, all of which would greatly aid in finding a resolution to this issue.

(Kelly Dearman) Positive Psychology Interventions

For many decades, the focus of psychology has been on pathology and how to heal and deal with those problems. Positive psychology was then created to bring more attention to the positive qualities in life and how to cultivate them. Positive Psychology Interventions (PPIs) are the approaches from positive psychology to help nurture and maintain these positive qualities. This study proposed here seeks to explore the question: What are people's lived experiences when practicing the Best Possible Self (BPS) intervention (a type of Positive Psychology Intervention) in their daily lives? The participants would practice the BPS intervention for 2-4 weeks as well as writing down their experiences in a journal, then data would be analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

(Jay Fasone) The Black Body and the Museum: The Leipzig 19, provenance research, and a proposal for recontextualizing human remains in scientific custody

In 2025, the skulls of 19 Black Americans were repatriated to New Orleans following more than a century in the custody of German medical institutions. These skulls, largely stripped of their names and identities, were taken from the corpses of 19 Black patients who died during the 1870's, and were exported to spend their afterlives benefitting European understandings of phrenology— a study which purported that intellect and morality could be determined based upon the shape and measurements of the human skull. Though their return reflects evolving standards in the field of repatriation, questions persist regarding the structure of these repatriations, delays in their return, and the deeper implications of deceased Black remains in scientific practice. This paper strives to deconstruct this event and those similar to it by using a deconstructionist and symbolic approach modeled on the works of Mary Douglas. By considering the historic exploitation of Black bodies in the scientific tradition, I seek to outline a new process by which scientific institutions can hope to standardize and centralize their repatriation process.

(Izabel Ferchaud) Addiction in Homelessness: How Being Unhoused Increases Barriers to Receiving Healthcare and Addiction Treatment

Addiction is a chronic issue in the homeless population of America. This struggle of addiction causes many issues. One prevalent issue is increased barriers to receiving treatment for addiction. This presentation will address the research question, “how does being homeless affect someone’s ability to receive treatment?” This research explores what happens to people who are addicted to substances (such as xylazine, fentanyl, meth, and alcohol). It will focus on the severity of these addictive substances, and how homelessness exacerbates the problem. This study will contain both quantitative and qualitative data.

(Kelsie Gray) Attachment Styles and Unhealthy Relationships

This presentation will discuss how different attachment styles can influence how we view relationships. Have you ever questioned what your attachment style is? Then this presentation is just for you! The presentation also gives realistic scenarios and asks questions to the audience. I will interact with the audience by elaborating further onto my points and consistently ask questions invoking responses. In all, this presentation will educate others of the importance to understand the emotions you're feeling, also to know whether your relationship is one worth staying in or not.

(Shelby Alexia Freeman) A Dignity-Centered, Function-Based Intervention for Reducing Aggression and Enhancing Autonomy in Autism Abstract

Aggressive and self-injurious behaviors in autistic children can make school and social activities difficult, increase stress for caregivers, and often lead to restrictive or medication-based interventions. While behavioral strategies are effective at reducing these behaviors, few studies focus on supporting the child’s dignity, choice, and independence. This study looks at a dignity-centered, skill-building intervention designed to reduce aggression and self-injury while increasing functional communication and autonomy. Using a multiple baseline design across participants, children aged 5–12 will receive individualized interventions based on functional behavior assessment. The program includes teaching communication skills, reinforcing positive behaviors, adjusting the environment, and coaching caregivers to support choice and participation. We will measure changes in aggression, self-injury, communication skills, caregiver stress, and family perceptions of child autonomy. This approach combines evidence-based methods with humanistic values to create more respectful, empowering, and sustainable care for autistic children.

(Khanh Hoang) The interpersonal interaction of co-workers and supervisors to employees facing mental illness in the working environment

In recent years, mental well-being has become a discussed topic to the general public, especially in the workplace context. I am researching the interpersonal reaction of co-worker and supervisors to employees facing mental illness in the working environment. There are three main research questions that I am working on, focusing on the response of co-workers and supervisors to employees being mentally ill, and also the challenges that workers have to face when speaking about their mental status. In my perspective, I believe that this research has potential to develop more and contribute to solving several problems in the workplace.

(Emma Houssain) Humanistic Psychology and Symbolism

Humanistic Psychology first emerged on the scene as a response to behaviorism and psychoanalysis as a focus on the whole person. In the current state of mainstream psychological science, there is an emphasis on chemicals in the brain rather than the whole human; and with the surge in AI, humanistic psychology is being called for resurrection. One way to bring attention back to human experience in psychology is via symbol. By shining light on archetypal imagery in psychological science, meaning becomes fused back into experience as facilitators of human truth; This is a calling to reexamine potent symbols in our collective life as well as each of our personal lives, to use their meaning as portals for growth and development for the psyche. This line of thought will be supplemented with a posterboard to be filled with drawings of everyone's (who wants to share) personal symbols.

(Jurnee D. Jackson) Whose Psychology Is It? Rethinking Mental Health Beyond Eurocentric Frameworks

Psychology has historically been grounded in Western, Eurocentric frameworks that define "normal" behavior, development, and mental health through a limited cultural lens. Although these models have shaped modern psychological science, they often fail to capture the lived experiences of Black and Brown communities. When mental health theories and assessment practices overlook cultural context, systemic inequality, and intergenerational trauma, they risk producing misunderstanding, misdiagnosis, and ongoing distrust of mental health professionals. My presentation will critically examine the limitations of Eurocentric psychology in understanding Black and Brown mental health and emphasizes the need for culturally responsive approaches. Drawing on research in cultural psychology and trauma theory, I explore how historical, social, and structural factors influence psychological functioning within marginalized populations. Additionally, I discuss pathways toward a more inclusive discipline through diverse research practices, culturally informed assessment, and community centered care. Ultimately, this work advocates for a more equitable psychology that fosters trust and improves access to meaningful mental health support.

(Jaden Jackson) Invisible in the Exam Room: The Psychological Impact of Gender Bias in Healthcare

Women's health concerns have often been overlooked in medical research and clinical practice, creating disparities in diagnosis and treatment. This presentation examines how psychological processes contribute to gender bias in healthcare. Historically, medical research frequently excluded women or treated the male body as the default model. In some cases, researchers assumed women experienced pain differently or less intensely, which led to unethical experimentation and the dismissal of data that did not match male-centered expectations. As a result, many treatments, including common pain medications, were originally developed based on male physiology. These patterns continue to influence how healthcare providers interpret women's symptoms today. Cognitive bias and gender stereotypes can lead to delayed diagnoses, dismissal of pain, and unequal treatment. Understanding these biases is essential for cultivating a more equitable and responsive future in human science.

(Madison L. Jones) It's All in Your Head: A Mixed Methods Study on the Bridge Between Phenomenology and Psychoneuroimmunology

Among current biopsychosocial trends, it is no secret that college students are often well acquainted with stress. This study will explore both the perception of and meaning behind one's relationship with stress, and how this personal relationship impacts the sympathetic nervous system response. This mind-body connection will be studied through a phenomenological lens, investigating a bridge between phenomenology and psychoneuroimmunology. Utilizing quantitative and qualitative paradigms, this study will be conducted through a survey containing a Likert scale adapted from the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and researcher-developed items, followed by an independently developed phenomenological inquiry section, forming a mixed methods approach.

(Rayne Kolsrud) Mental Health: The Impact on Creativity

Psychology has advanced dramatically not only in its research methods but also in its data and scientific discoveries. These discoveries led to the idea that Psychology shapes human behavior far more than most realize, influencing unconscious thinking, feelings, and responses to stimuli. Similarly, creativity is an area of thinking that also revolves around logical reasoning and the emotional experience of an individual. It is an area that can reveal a person's abilities, messages they are trying to convey to their audiences, and mainly to express their internal processes and perspectives through visual media. Because creative expression is aligned to one's emotional and cognitive state, it suggests the idea that mental health may play a role in the creative process. More specifically, mental health may directly impact the direction and output of creativity. The purpose of this research is to prove the existence of mental health impacting creativity, rather than determine whether the influence is positive or negative.

(Lamis Lara) Conditions of Worth in the Digital Home: How Family Vlogging Shapes Identity and Authenticity

In the rise of the digital age, new forms of using technology have expanded. A new form of content creation on social media consists of documenting family moments with parents and children both participating. However, many of these moments can be private moments in a child's life. An altered sense of self when performing on camera to receive attention from parents can harm the development of a child. Their adequacy is measured in whatever performance the parents or the viewers want to see. It is also to say that many parents use social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube to make money out of their children as content. Gaining a lot of money or attention does not necessarily mean that children are more worthy of love, nor does this mean that children want to be filmed at every moment. This begs the question of how do these children experience conditions of worth when it is directly related to 'performing well' on camera.

(Malkam Kraft) The Crucial Study of Child Abuse and Preventions

This presentation is a focused overview of; Causes, Effects, Preventions, Stigmas, and Therapy in an ongoing study examining child abuse. Causes explore factors that contribute to child abuse, like mental health, economics, and emotional suffering. Effects discusses long and short-term physical and psychological consequences of abuse like the manifestation of ailments like PTSD and injuries. Prevention focuses on victims or witnesses of abuse seeking interventions, like the wellness station set up in the lobby. Stigmas examine how attitudes toward abuse vary across cultures. Therapy discusses various therapeutic approaches available for victims of abuse.

(Tamia Mack) The Mind the Body and Coloring

In this presentation will cover the research I conducted over the 2025 spring semester. My focus is in this area: coloring and how it affects the mind and body. This is a continuation of a small pilot study I did in my "Mind and Body" psychology class, in which I had students write a reflection on their current emotions, color something, and reflect again, documenting any change in emotion. I concluded that coloring had a positive impact on participants. The project is currently ongoing as I am working to get feedback on other age groups to include in my research.

(Ariana Matias) The Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences on Attachment Styles and Psychological Wellbeing in Latinx Young Adults

This literature review and proposed study examine how Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) relate to attachment styles and mental health outcomes in Latinx young adults. Although ACEs, childhood trauma, and attachment are well studied in general populations, limited research has focused on Latinx young adults, despite evidence that intergenerational trauma and cultural practices play a crucial role in emotional expression and developmental outcomes. Research has shown the impact that ACEs have on youth mental health issues (Zhen et al., 2025). Reviewing this literature emphasizes the need for culturally responsive approaches to cultivating secure attachment and promoting psychological wellbeing within Latinx communities.

(Rafael Oquendo) Epilepsy and Spirituality

This research focuses on the relationship between the mind, body, and the spirit. In the process of my research, one question remains: whether accepting these experiences, regardless of whether they stem from seizure activity or genuine spiritual insight, might provide psychological balance rather than clear answers about their true nature. By applying this research to the community, I hope to heal many of those with epilepsy.

(Emily Meyer) Lived Experiences of Receiving Empathy

This investigation aims to look closer at and gain a deeper understanding of individuals' lived experiences with receiving empathy. Through semi-structured interviews, I guided participants in reflecting on moments of receiving empathy. Together, we constructed an account of these lived experiences, what those experiences meant to them, how they shaped their relationships, and what empathy meant to them personally. A thematic analysis of the data identified the patterns across each narrative, with the ultimate goal being to understand empathy as a social experience between people, and how those experiences shape the way those people perceive both themselves and the world.

(Malia Pope) From Woods to Screens: Imaginative Play, Digital Media, and Parental Mediation in Early Childhood

This literature review examines how imaginative play in early childhood is evolving in the digital age and the role parents play in guiding children's use of technology. Drawing on developmental theory and current research, it highlights the cognitive, emotional, and social benefits of imaginative play, including creativity and self-regulation. While concerns remain about passive screen use and reduced open-ended play, emerging research shows that well-designed digital environments can support storytelling and collaboration. The paper argues that the effects of digital media depend more on the relational context than the technology itself. When parents co-play or connect digital content to offline experiences, digital play can foster imagination. The paper concludes by calling for more nuanced and culturally diverse research on children's play.

(Ashleigh Rogers) Beyond the Battlefield: Mental Health Disparities in Armed Forces Veterans

In Memory of Daniel Olson HHC 1-27 INF 25th ID Sniper Section Wolfhounds
 Veterans experience disproportionately high rates of mental illness compared to civilian populations, yet our veterans frequently encounter significant barriers to receive proper psychological care. Research consistently shows an inflated presence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, substance use disorders (SUD) and suicide among military veterans, often stemming from combat exposure, chronic stress, and reintegration challenges. Despite this heightened vulnerability, many veterans face extended wait times, limited access to specialized services, stigma surrounding help-seeking, and gaps in continuity of care. These systemic obstacles contribute to underdiagnosis, untreated symptoms, and adverse outcomes, including impaired functioning and increased suicide risk. My study examines the discrepancy between mental health needs and treatment access within veteran populations, highlighting structural, cultural, and logistical barriers that contribute to unmet care. Understanding these factors is essential for informing evidence-based interventions and improving service delivery to better support the psychological well-being of those who have served.

(Mireille Bordeaux) Omnipresence Journal

Omnipresence aims to identify and fill a critical void in undergraduate publishing: the specific psychological study of gender and sexuality. The purpose of the journal is to provide a specific outlet for spreading the research and content related to our topics. As the title concepts researched are "omnipresent" in our lives. Prejudice, exclusivity, and blatant hostility against those of minority communities within the world make the outreach of such research more important than ever before.

A new journal requires much research into the framework of similar journals as well as understanding what resources are needed for an editorial board made up of similar undergraduates. Making decisions within an undergraduate board and inventing solutions as situations arise is also important to the process. I will be able to explore this in-depth within my presentation of the journal.

(Victoria Taylor) The Experience of Being a Caregiver

In this research, the goal is to answer the question "What are the emotions, as well as physical feelings, associated with being a caregiver?" In order to do this, a survey was sent out to participants to gather qualitative data to gain insight into how an informal caregiver felt while providing care. Data was also gathered about the informal caregiver's relationship to the person they are caring for. The data suggested that there were a variety of physical and mental feelings regarding being an informal caregiver.

(Emma Wood) Mental Health Treatment in Foster Youth

Children in the United States Foster Care System disproportionately experience traumas stemming from abuse, neglect, family separation, and placement into the child welfare system. Such experiences make these children much more likely to suffer from mental illnesses such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, behavior disorders, etc., than their peers. In response, foster youth are prescribed psychotropics at higher rates than their peers. While this is sometimes a beneficial route, there are concerns that medication is overprescribed in response to these trauma-related symptoms as opposed to curating a personalized treatment plan for each foster child of concern. Overreliance on psychotropic medication can lead to additional problematic symptoms and negatively impact a child's development. These prescriptions are often inappropriately prescribed, but are also the easiest "solution" to foster youth's mental health challenges. This paper argues for therapeutic reform for the U.S. child welfare system, and to emphasize the need to prioritize holistic, trauma-informed care over routine medications. Evidence based, trauma-informed therapy facilitates foster children processing traumatic events, developing positive coping skills, and building resilience. However, barriers such as placement instability and insufficient funding prevent foster youth from receiving necessary care. These barriers can be addressed through improving oversight of prescription services, policy reform, and adequate funding for mental health care. It is essential, in order to ensure foster youth are provided equal, appropriate support instead of easy symptom management.

HISTORY OF SPARC

In order to create a forum for student research, Student Psychology Annual Research Conference (SPARC) was inaugurated in the spring of 1999. The spark for SPARC came from graduate students enrolled in a research class during that semester. They wondered if there could be a good place to share and dialogue further about their research. Students then designed, organized and delivered the conference and have continued to do so ever since. Significantly, this conference was set up not as a competition but instead as a clearing for undergraduate and graduate Psychology students, faculty, and friends to join in a community of learners.

SPARC provides a focal point for end-of-year presentations, a testing ground for new ideas, an opportunity to refine and practice presentation skills, and a celebration of scholarship and creativity. We are very proud of our students; we invite you to jump in and take this time to continue our learning together.

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

1. Cleo Margaret Hackney Scholarship

- Sophomore, Junior, or Senior who intends to complete a B.S. in psychology at UWG and is a resident of Carroll, Polk, or Troup Counties or a resident of the state of GA. Financial need is to be considered. The awardee(s) will receive a scholarship along with recognition at SPARC and Scholars' Day.

2. The Thomas Herndon Award in Psychology

- These awards are presented annually to outstanding students from academic disciplines in the social sciences. Recipients must have a declared major in the field of the award, superior academic achievement, demonstrated leadership ability, potential for development in the respective academic discipline, and active involvement in extracurricular activities. The award was established in 1953 by friends and classmates in memory of the late Thomas A. Herndon, Jr. a graduate of the class of 1939. Award recipients are required to have a minimum overall 3.2 GPA, and transfer students must have completed a full semester at UWG and maintained a minimum 3.2 GPA from each institution. Only undergraduates are eligible to be nominated. The awardee will receive recognition at SPARC and Scholars' Day.

3. Academic Recognition Day Scholar

- The Academic Recognition Day program honors undergraduate students from the University System of Georgia who are residents of Georgia and maintain a 4.0 grade point average. Academic Recognition Day began more than 30 years ago as a celebration of Georgia students' academic achievement. The honorees receive a resolution from the Georgia House of Representatives, along with a letter of commendation from the University System chancellor. The awardee will receive recognition at SPARC and Scholars' Day.

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

4. Mike Arons Scholarship

- Dr. Mike Arons, professor of psychology emeritus, was honored by former students, faculty, and friends by the establishment of the Mike Arons Humanistic Psychology Scholarship at the University of West Georgia. The scholarship fund was established by former students Dr. Larry Schor, UWG associate professor of psychology, and Dr. John Buchanan, president of the Helios Foundation, to benefit a UWG graduate student majoring in psychology.

5. Jim Thomas Scholarship

- Dr. James “Jim” Thomas was one of the legacy founders of the UWG Psychology Department. Working closely with Dr. Mike Arons they created an astonishing 45 new courses for the program which attracted students from all over the world to visit and study UWG’s unique approach of Humanistic Psychology. In honor of his contribution to the department, the Jim Thomas Humanistic Psychology Award was founded.

SPECIAL THANK YOU

- ❖ Those members of the SPARC 2026 Planning Committee that expressed leadership and effort toward the event; Giancarlo Volpe, Charity Paschall, Malkalm Kraft, Riona Harrigan, Jazmin Dominguez, and Gabrielle Williams.
- ❖ Thank you to our faculty support from Dr. Cassandra Bolar for acting as a faculty advisor and planning support for SPARC 2026. Also, thank you to Dr. Lisa Osbeck, Dr. Louise Grann, and Dr. Richard Lefleur for your administrative support.
- ❖ Thank you to our sponsors for donating us food to celebrate! Our sponsors are: American Pie, Corner Cafe, Leopoldo's, LocoMex, and Big Chick.
- ❖ The biggest thanks go out to all our student presenters and their faculty advisors who helped make SPARC a success this year! And, to the community (past, present, and future) for its steady support.