CHARLES LAFITTE™
FOUNDATION

2024 - 2025 IMPACT REPORT

Charles Lafitte Foundation Program in Psychological & Neuroscience Research at Duke University

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A NOTE FROM OUR CHAIR

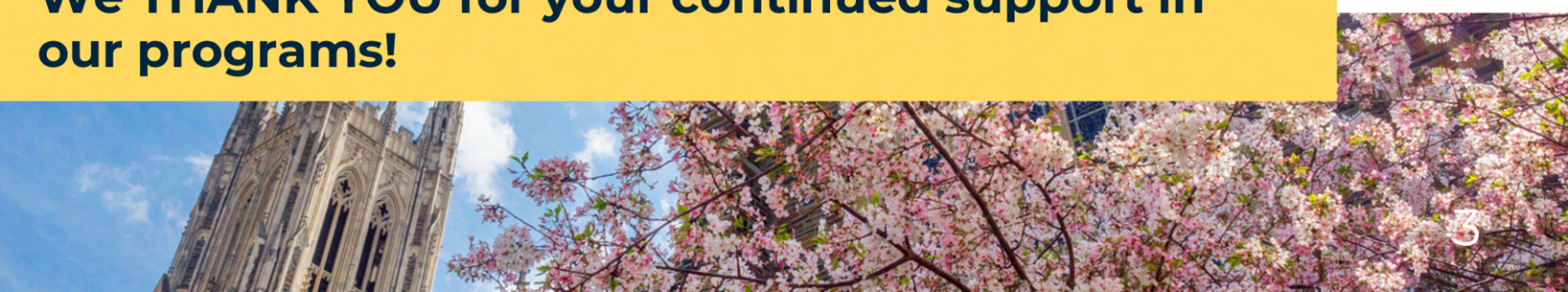
It is with immense pride and profound gratitude to the Charles Lafitte Foundation that I peruse the pages of this report. Looking back on the past year—my first as Department Chair—I realize that the most rewarding aspects of my role have inevitably involved witnessing the growth of our large population of trainees, ranging from undergraduate students to graduate students to postdoctoral fellows. The support from the Charles Lafitte Foundation is truly fundamental to fostering that growth, as it provides the figurative glue that connects these diverse groups of trainees. Nearly all undergraduate research projects supported by your generous gift involve hands-on mentoring from graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty—a true vertical integration of mentorship and learning!

I have had the opportunity to personally visit several posters presented by our Lafitte-supported undergraduate students at two national conferences this past year, and it was truly inspiring. The poise, knowledge, and confidence these students displayed consistently impressed even the most seasoned professors—many of whom initially mistook our undergraduates for graduate students! We consider ourselves incredibly fortunate to offer such enriching experiences and reading the students' reflections on what the Lafitte grant program has made possible for them is my favorite part of this report.

Looking ahead, it is clear that federal support for academic research is faced with new scrutiny, which raises concerns about the future of research opportunities and training in higher education. Given this context, the generous and ongoing support from the Charles Lafitte Foundation for our department's mission to foster undergraduate research excellence is more important than ever. On behalf of my colleagues, our staff, and the students of the Duke Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, I extend an especially big and heartfelt THANK YOU!

Tobias Egner, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Psychology & Neuroscience, Duke University

We THANK YOU for your continued support in our programs!



BY THE NUMBERS

Thanks to your generosity, The Charles Lafitte Foundation's support continues to play a vital role in advancing student-led research in the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience and continues to champion innovative research that actively involves trainees at every level—from undergraduates to graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

In 2024–2025, funding was primarily distributed through two key avenues: small research grants supporting individual student projects and travel awards enabling students to present their work at national conferences.

Applications were reviewed by a committee of P&N faculty members and evaluated based on overall scholarly merit, innovation, anticipated impact on the applicant's research and academic development at Duke, and feasibility within the proposed timeline. For graduate student awards, special consideration was given to projects or conference travel that engaged undergraduates, particularly those that included undergraduate co-authors.

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UNDERGRADUATE NATIONAL CONFERENCE TRAVEL AWARDS

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UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

SPOTLIGHT

The undergraduate student spotlight this year features Psychology major Jeslyn Brouwers, Class of 2025. Brouwers is one of eighteen students who earned Graduation with Distinction in Psychology for the 2024–2025 academic year. She is also the recipient of the Jerome S. Bruner Award, a prestigious honor that recognizes a graduating senior who demonstrates exceptional intellectual curiosity, with an emphasis on research experience and potential for future scholarly achievement.

As an international student from Thailand and the Netherlands, Jeslyn Brouwers first discovered her passion for psychology at the International School of Bangkok. She is deeply grateful to her high school psychology teacher, Ms. Ginny Voigt, for introducing her to the field and inspiring her to imagine publishing her own research paper someday. At Duke University, Brouwers began realizing that vision by joining the Tomasello Lab as a research assistant during her freshman year. “Working as a research assistant allowed me to transition from being a student of psychology to actively participating in the research process and contributing to the field’s advancement of knowledge. However, I quickly aspired to move beyond supporting research to leading my own investigations in topics that sparked my curiosity,” Brouwers explains.

Brouwers successfully defended her honors research thesis last spring. She described the experience as “not only the culmination of my academic achievements but also a celebration of the incredible support I’ve received from my friends, family, and the faculty at Duke throughout the process.” She credited Dr. Bridgette Hard as a pivotal mentor in her growth as a psychology researcher. “Dr. Hard has consistently pushed me to grow beyond what I thought was possible, encouraging me to problem-solve with creativity and believe in my potential,” Brouwers shared.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

SPOTLIGHT continued

Like most research, inspiration often comes from personal experiences, and for Brouwers, it began with observing the widespread negative sentiment among undergraduates toward group projects. Under the guidance of Drs. Bridgette Hard and Angela Vieth, Brouwers and her co-researcher Alissa Rivero designed and conducted a two-part study. This research, titled Why Students Dislike Group Projects: Understanding and Addressing the Barriers to Collaborative Learning, first aimed to identify factors shaping student attitudes toward group work within a Duke Psychology Research Methods and Statistics course and, second, apply these findings to design and evaluate a pedagogical intervention to improve these collaborative learning experiences.

Thanks in part to support from the Lafitte URS Small Grant, Brouwers was able to extend her independent study research beyond the classroom and into instructor practice. “With the URS Small Grant, I was able to conduct a focus group discussion with the professors from EDUC 240, ETHICS 89s, and PSY 204 as part of my independent study research,” Brouwers shared. The funding was used to host a working lunch for the participating faculty, providing a space for collaborative reflection on the group work interventions implemented in their courses during the Fall 2023 semester.

During the 30–45 minute discussion, faculty shared their impressions of how the interventions influenced students' group project experiences—highlighting both the benefits and challenges observed across different course contexts. “This opportunity gave me incredibly valuable qualitative insights,” Brouwers explained. “The findings from this focus group are not only shaping my thesis but are also being used to modify the intervention strategies before reimplementation in Spring 2024.”

The ability to incorporate instructor perspectives has given Brouwers a more holistic understanding of collaborative learning and has added depth to her thesis project. The resulting report from this focus group will form a key part of her final thesis submission and inform the creation of a best practices manual designed for use in both high school and undergraduate classrooms.

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT

SPOTLIGHT continued

In addition to this milestone, Brouwers had the opportunity—thanks in part to support from the Lafitte Foundation - to present her honors thesis research at the 2024 American Psychological Association Conference in Seattle, WA. She described this year's experience as particularly meaningful as she prepares to apply to Ph.D. programs in Organizational Behavior. "While attending the conference, I was sure to attend a variety of sessions in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, network with keynote speakers whose research interests aligned with mine, and speak with practitioners about their work," she shared.

During her poster session, Brouwers presented the full scope of her two-year project, including baseline research and descriptions of the implemented group work intervention. Through this experience, she gained confidence in delivering a compelling elevator pitch and found new ways to connect with attendees by tailoring her presentation to their interests. "This experience has made me more motivated to believe in myself along this journey," she reflected. Attending the conference solo, without her usual co-presenter, was both empowering and affirming. "Presenting the project in its entirety on my own made me realize how incredibly proud I am of my path in Psychology at Duke."

Receiving the Bruner Award is an incredible personal and academic honor for Brouwers. It reflects both her growth as a psychologist throughout her journey at Duke and her passion for research, which she aims to continue pursuing in graduate school.

Brouwers is currently applying to Ph.D. programs in Organizational Behavior, where she hopes to research the topic of intrinsic motivation in settings that define much of modern life – the workplace. Brouwers states, "I seek to pursue a Ph.D. to help spark passion in others' work as I have found in my own academic journey." Looking ahead, Brouwers envisions a multifaceted career in academia, integrating innovative research with teaching and mentorship to advance knowledge and drive future-ready workplaces.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

A STORY OF GROWTH AND IMPACT

When we think about success, we often focus on the present and look ahead—setting new goals, making plans, and striving for more. But during this special year of Duke's Centennial Celebration, we also want to pause and look back. This is a moment to recognize the early contributions that laid the groundwork for where we are today. After all, every tree starts with a seed—and it's those seeds of support and vision that have allowed this project to grow and flourish.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

A STORY OF GROWTH AND IMPACT

Thanks to generous funding from the Charles Lafitte Foundation Research Seed Grant, Professors Thomas Newpher and Minna Ng co-founded the Duke Team-Based Learning (TBL) Lab (www.duke-tbl-lab.com) in the fall of 2019. The lab aims to identify teaching practices that enhance learning for all students, primarily focusing on active learning strategies in STEM courses. The lab has mentored 15 undergraduate researchers, whose contributions have led to poster presentations at national conferences, a Duke TEDx talk, and a publication.

They also formed the Bass Connections team, Collaborative Learning in STEM (2019-2021), which addressed the impacts of active learning on course-related behaviors and enthusiasm for course content in undergraduate STEM classrooms at Duke. Bass Connections is a Duke initiative that fosters interdisciplinary research teams to tackle big questions and societal challenges. When Covid-19 hit, the learning environment drastically changed, prompting Newpher and Ng to expand their study toward remote learning.

In the academic year '21-'22, Newpher and Ng received another seed grant from the Lafitte Foundation for their study titled “The student experience in STEM courses during the pandemic: a comparison of traditional face-to-face versus online course versions”. The study examines how the sudden shift from in-person classes to remote courses affected students' sense of belonging. Preliminary findings revealed that students' sense of belonging decreased in most, but not all, remote courses. The Duke TBL lab also published a study looking at the impacts of remote learning on student performance in collaborative learning courses.

This work revealed that student performance did not decline in remote collaborative learning courses when compared to in-person course versions. Additionally, they recognize the critical need to inspire students with early-career exposure to hands-on laboratory experiences and course-based research opportunities.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

A STORY OF GROWTH AND IMPACT continued

Thanks to the generosity of several donor families, the Duke Neuroscience major recently established a Neuroscience Teaching Lab (https://psychandneuro.duke.edu/neuroscience-teaching-lab). The lab's goal is to provide hands-on laboratory experiences in gateway, core, and methods courses to enhance student self-efficacy, collaboration, and engagement in neuroscience research. The Neuroscience Teaching Lab is located in the Duke Institute for Brain Sciences Cube at the LSRC, with resources available to serve as a mobile laboratory reaching classrooms across Duke's campus.

Newpher and Ng were recently awarded an Emerging Pedagogies Seed Grant to structure their investigation. Their grant, entitled “The Neuroscience Teaching Lab: Impacts on student self-efficacy and engagement in neuroscience research,” aims to assess whether it [Teaching Lab] impacted interest in research, improved self-efficacy, motivated them to begin faculty-mentored research projects, and influenced career goals/post-graduation plans.

Both the Neuroscience Teaching Lab and the Duke TBL Lab have had a significant impact on students and have been a great success, shaping student experiences at Duke. Their impact will leave a lasting mark, made possible by substantial support from the Lafitte Grant foundation.

THANK YOU

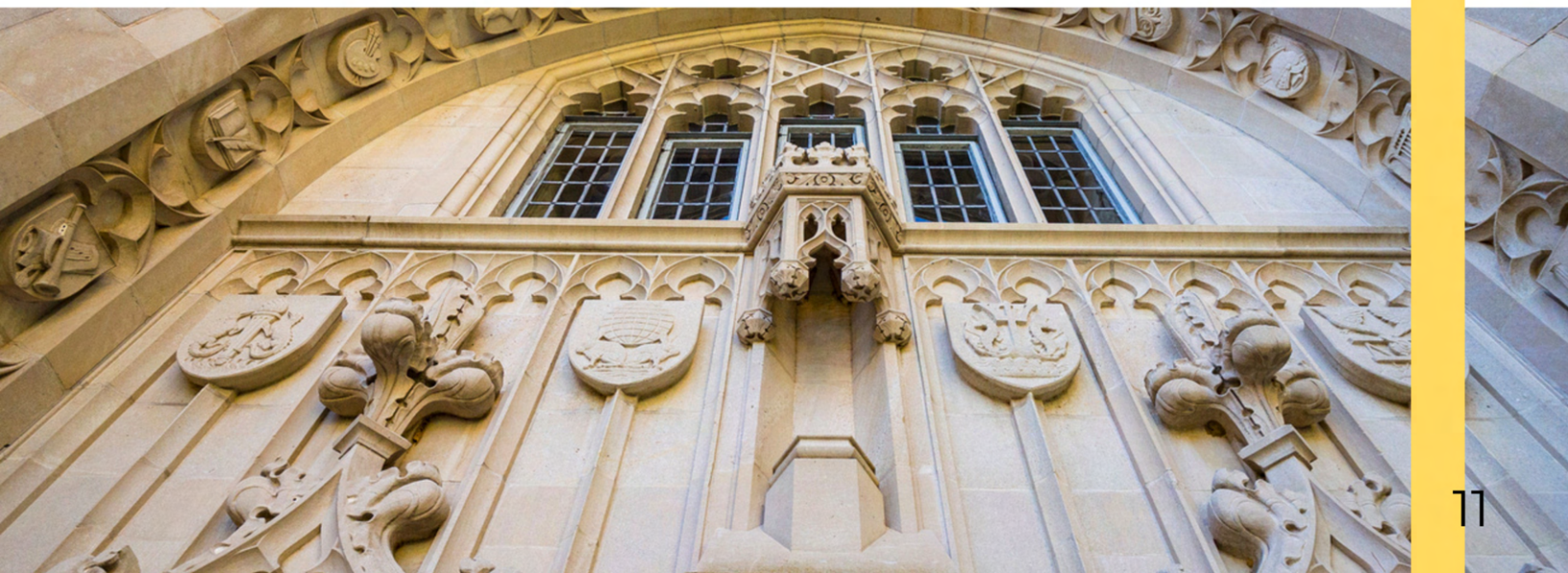
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Thanks to the generous support of the Charles Lafitte Foundation, the Department of Psychology & Neuroscience was able to increase the undergraduate research award to up to $700 this year—a $300 boost from the previous year. This enhancement allowed us to better support Psychology and Neuroscience majors in pursuing independent research.

The response was overwhelming: we more than doubled the number of applicants for the fall cycle. Award recipients used their funding to support various research-related expenses, including participant compensation, specialized software, and experimental materials such as toys for developmental studies and animal cages for neuroscience projects.

Many of these students are also enrolled in the Graduation with Distinction (GWD) program, where they propose, design, and conduct their own research studies. Their work culminates in a written thesis, a public oral defense, and a formal poster presentation of their findings.

We’re excited to build on this momentum and hope to replicate this success in the coming academic year. Here are the names and project titles of this year’s award recipients.



UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

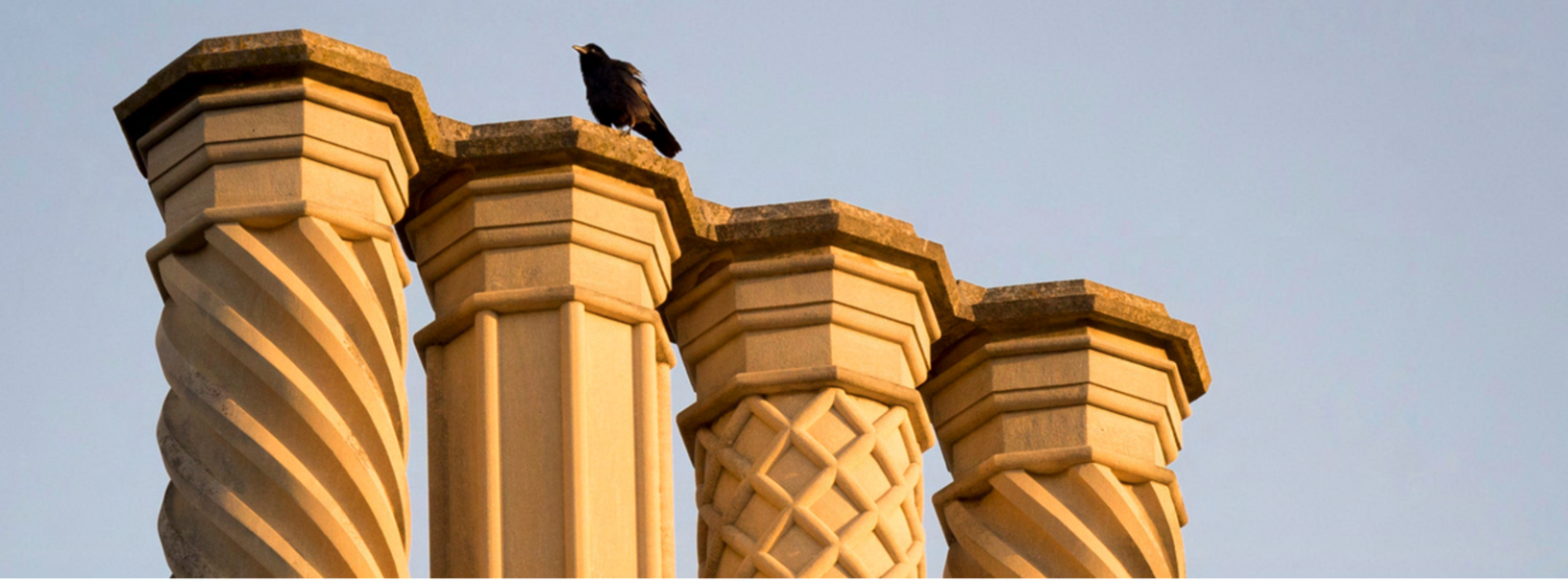
Name	Title of Project
Chris-Ann Bennett & Rose Simons	Cultural Differences in Mind Perception
Carly Blank	Children's Science-Related Attitudes: Language and Persistence in Interactions with Informal Science Education
Austin Chrisley	Moral Licensing at Different Stages of Choice
Charli Cordoves	Biracial Socialization: A Retrospective Look at the Racial Socialization of Biracial Adults and How this Impacts Racial Identity
Maddie Davies	Investigation of Social Cognitive Factors in Undergraduate Duke Students: To What Extent Does Writing Self-Efficacy and Self-Regulation Impact the Participation of the Duke University Student Population at the Writing Studio
Anna Ghelfi	The Neural and Cognitive Impact of Conscious Visual Perception on Self-Judged Responsibility
Anna Goldberg	Fostering Intellectual Humility: Investigating Pathways to Mitigate Political Polarization in the United States

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Name	Title of Project
Hannah Hortman	Ritonavir as a Potential Drug Therapeutic for Parkinson's Disease
Skylar Hughes	Attention & Visual Debunking: Does Divided Attention Impact the Effectiveness of Picture Corrections in Misinformation?
Jeanie Jia	The Manifestation of Masculinity in the Asian American Population: An Intersection Between Race, Gender, and Culture
Martin Ma	Knowledge and Imagination: Semantic Counterfactual Thinking
Kaelin Main	Commitment, Goal Perseverance, and Intention-Coordination in 5-, 6-, and 7- year-olds.
Hiba Mokhtari	How Do Regional Cultural Differences Across the United States Influence the Moral Decision-Making of Individuals Who Share the Same Religious Beliefs?
Grace Richardson	How Does Global *Ctnnd2* Deletion Affect Ocular Dominance Plasticity (ODP) in Juvenile Mice?

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

Name	Title of Project
Alissa Rivero	Understanding and Improving K-12 Experiences with Group Work
Jaclyn Rogers	Learning Value Perceptions
Vicky Ramirez	Exploring the Role of Emotional Expression and Culture in Latine Health
Emma Xiong	The Underdetermination Dilemma: Children's Use of Closure Principles in Rule Learning and Moral Action
Sarah Williams	Young Children's Commitment and Promise Keeping
Emily Wu	Regulation of Blood Brain Barrier Integrity with Social Experience
Shenwei Zhang	Reducing Expectation Discrepancies Reduces Stress Without Diminishing Performance



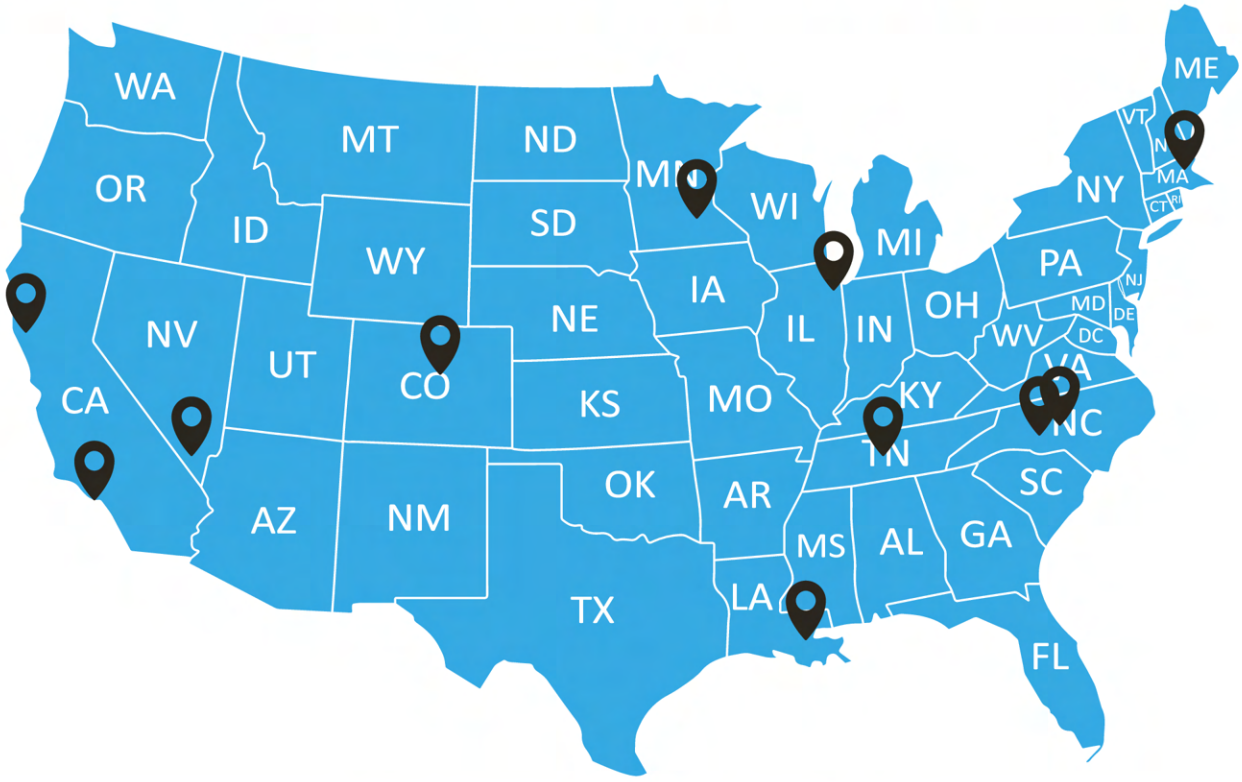
UNDERGRADUATE CONFERENCE TRAVEL

Thanks to the generous support of the Charles Lafitte Foundation, the Undergraduate Travel Awards provide critical funding for students in Psychology and Neuroscience to share their research at academic conferences. These awards help cover the cost of registration, membership fees (if they reduce registration costs), transportation, lodging, meals, and poster printing—making it possible for students to participate in professional development opportunities that might otherwise be financially out of reach.

The program offers two tiers of support: up to $1,600 for students attending national conferences, and up to $500 for those participating in regional or local conferences. Whether students are presenting at a national stage like the American Psychological Association (APA) Convention or the Association for Psychological Science (APS) Convention, or engaging with peers and scholars at a local symposium, the award enables them to gain presentation experience, receive expert feedback, network with researchers, explore graduate programs, and engage with cutting-edge work across the discipline.

These opportunities are often described by recipients as defining moments in their undergraduate careers, and we are incredibly grateful to the Charles Lafitte Foundation for making them possible.

WHERE OUR STUDENTS PRESENTED



NATIONAL CONFERENCES

Association for Applied Sport Psychology – Las Vegas, NV
Association for Psychological Science (APS) – San Francisco, CA
Cognitive Neuroscience Society (CNS), Boston, MA
End Well 2024 – Los Angeles, CA
Polysubstance Use: From Bench to Communities (RSA Conference) – New Orleans, LA
Social & Affective Neuroscience Society (SANS) – Chicago, IL
Society for Neuroscience – Chicago, IL
Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) – Denver, CO
Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) – Minneapolis, MN
Southeastern Medical Scientist Symposium (SEMSS) – Nashville, TN

REGIONAL/LOCAL CONFERENCES

Carolinas Psychology Conference – Buies Creek, NC
Neuroscience Teaching Conference- Winston Salem, NC

IN THEIR

WORDS

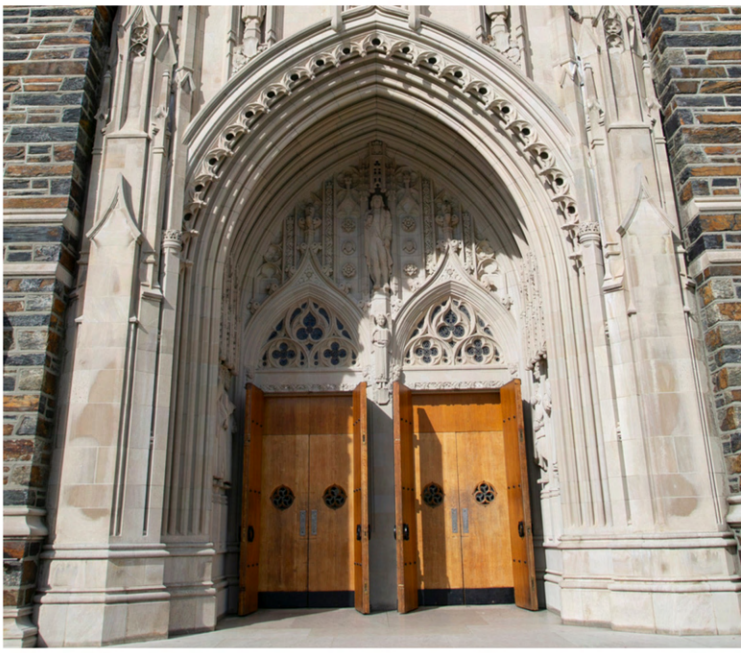
Thanks to the generous support of the Charles Lafitte Foundation, undergraduate students have been able to pursue meaningful, independent research experiences and share their work at academic conferences - opportunities that deeply impact their academic and personal growth. From gaining confidence as emerging scholars to exploring research questions rooted in their own identities and communities, students consistently express how this funding has empowered them to take ownership of their work. Many credit this opportunity as a pivotal step in shaping their future goals and continuing along a research path in graduate school and beyond. Below are excerpts from student testimonials highlighting the lasting value of this support.

"Without the Lafitte grant, the use of the Phonic AI software wouldn't have been possible... Being able to test interventions aimed at increasing intellectual humility around a politically polarized issue was both timely and meaningful. In an increasingly divided America, the potential to stimulate humility and openness is promising and important. "

Anna Goldberg, Class of 2025

"Through my independent study research, I have grown both as a person and scientist... With the help of this grant, I was able to purchase key materials to investigate potential therapeutics for Parkinson's Disease and feel truly supported in my scientific journey."

Hannah Hortman, Class of 2026



"Obtaining the Lafitte Grant was the first step in the development of my empirical study... As someone who couldn't engage in research in high school, I'm extremely grateful for the opportunity to investigate a topic I care deeply about. This experience has solidified my desire to pursue a PhD and grow as a researcher."

Jeanie Jia, Class of 2025

"Thanks to the Lafitte Research Grant, I was able to use a nationally representative sample, which strengthened the validity of my findings on how learning value perceptions shape feedback behaviors, fear of failure, and goal orientation. This experience has solidified my goal of pursuing further education in Psychology and continuing to conduct research on topics I'm passionate about."

Jaclyn Rogers, Class of 2027

"The Charles Lafitte Foundation's support allowed me to fully dedicate myself to studying how children understand social norms, from participant recruitment to presenting at conferences. This experience was a major milestone in my development as a researcher and communicator—and I'm grateful for the skills I'll carry into both life sciences consulting and eventually medical school."

Emma Xiong, Class of 2025

"Thanks to the Lafitte grant, I was able to purchase materials, compensate participants, and complete my Honors Thesis on how promises shape children's social behavior. This support made it possible for me to present at national conferences, graduate with distinction, and ultimately be accepted into a psychology PhD program."

Sarah Williams, Class of 2025

"With the support of the Lafitte Research Grant, I was able to investigate how social experience affects blood-brain barrier integrity and immune gene expression in Drosophila. This funding enabled critical experiments and collaborations, helping me explore mechanisms that may underlie neurodegenerative and mood disorders. I'm incredibly grateful to the Charles Lafitte Foundation for supporting research that has shaped my growth in neurobiology."

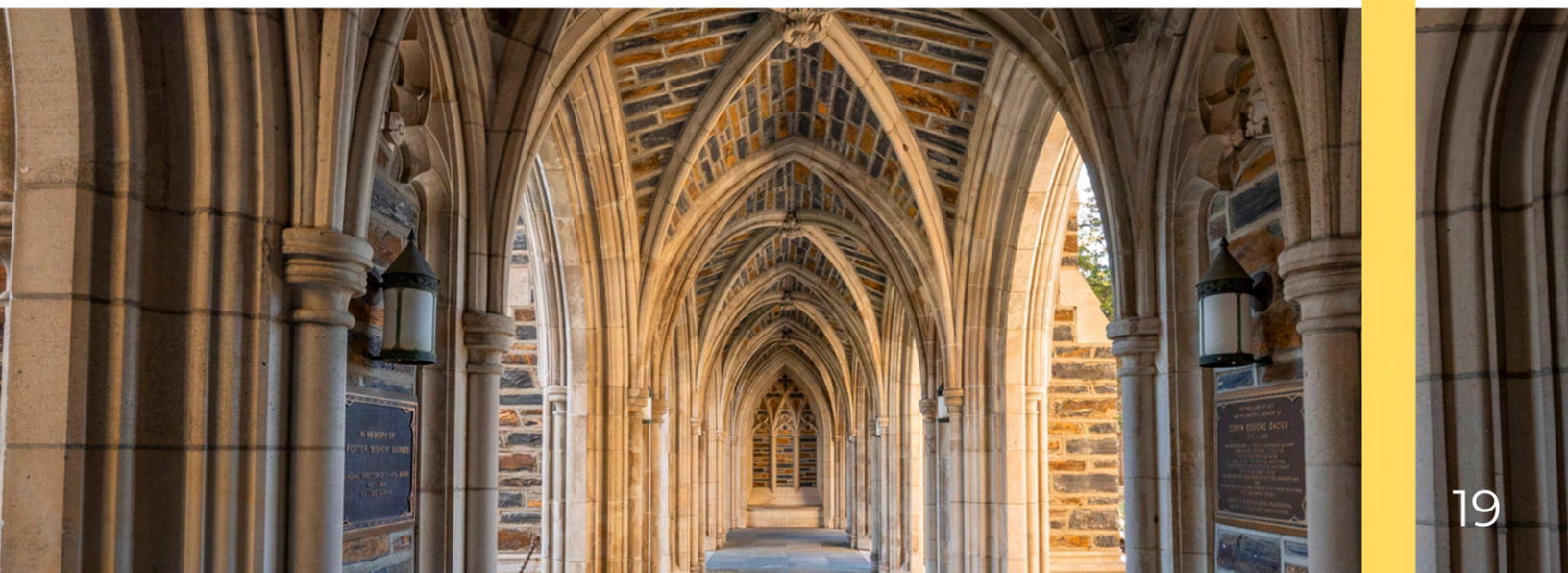
Emily Wu, Class of 2026

GRADUATE RESEARCH

Since its inception, over 100 research grants have been awarded to Duke Psychology and Neuroscience graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. This year, we awarded 14 Graduate Research Grants through a more rigorous and focused selection process. To further support undergraduate research and training, we made undergraduate involvement the top priority and a requirement for funding consideration. The results have been remarkable.

This new emphasis led to a significant increase in undergraduate student participation. Over 35 undergraduates were directly involved in funded research projects, gaining hands-on experience with subject recruitment, data management, behavioral data collection, programming (e.g., Matlab, Python), data analysis, and scientific writing.

The selection process remains highly competitive, with priority given to empirical projects that actively engage undergraduates as part of the research team. Below are the names and project titles of this year's 14 Graduate Research Grant recipients.



GRADUATE RESEARCH

Name	Title of Project
Oretioluwasefunmi Agbelusi	Black Immigrant Socialization and Identity Development: A Retrospective Look
Jackie Bao	Motivation Under Uncertainty: How Outcome Predictability Influences Task Effort
Charles Davis	Using ChatGPT as a Tool for Active Learning
Nitisha Desai	Moral Licensing in Multi-Stage Decisions
Natalia Espinosa	Social Perception in Latin America: An Exploration of Models of Agency and Attribution
Nimesha Gerlus	GABA Levels in the Insular Cortex: A Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy Study of Transdiagnostic Emotion Dysregulation
Mercedes Muñoz	Exploring the Effect of Different Demographic Forms on Latine Adults' Self-Perceptions

GRADUATE RESEARCH

Name	Title of Project
Esha Naidu	Can Gesture Improve Interracial Interactions?
Yvonne Ochieng	Caring for Families Affected by Pediatric Sickle Cell Disease: Contextualized Interventions for Kenya
Joyce Park	Re-evaluating the Memorial Consequences of Internet Searching
Michael Patton	Maternal High-Fat Diet Promotes Region and Sex Specific Remodeling of Serotonin Circuits
Jane Rothrock	The Influence of Negative Mood and Perseverative Thought on Memory Specificity
Jessa Stegall	Understanding Preschoolers' Stress Responses to Costly Norms and Directives
Skyler Wyly	Goal Commitment Beliefs: Distinct Predictors of Self-regulation in Goal Pursuit

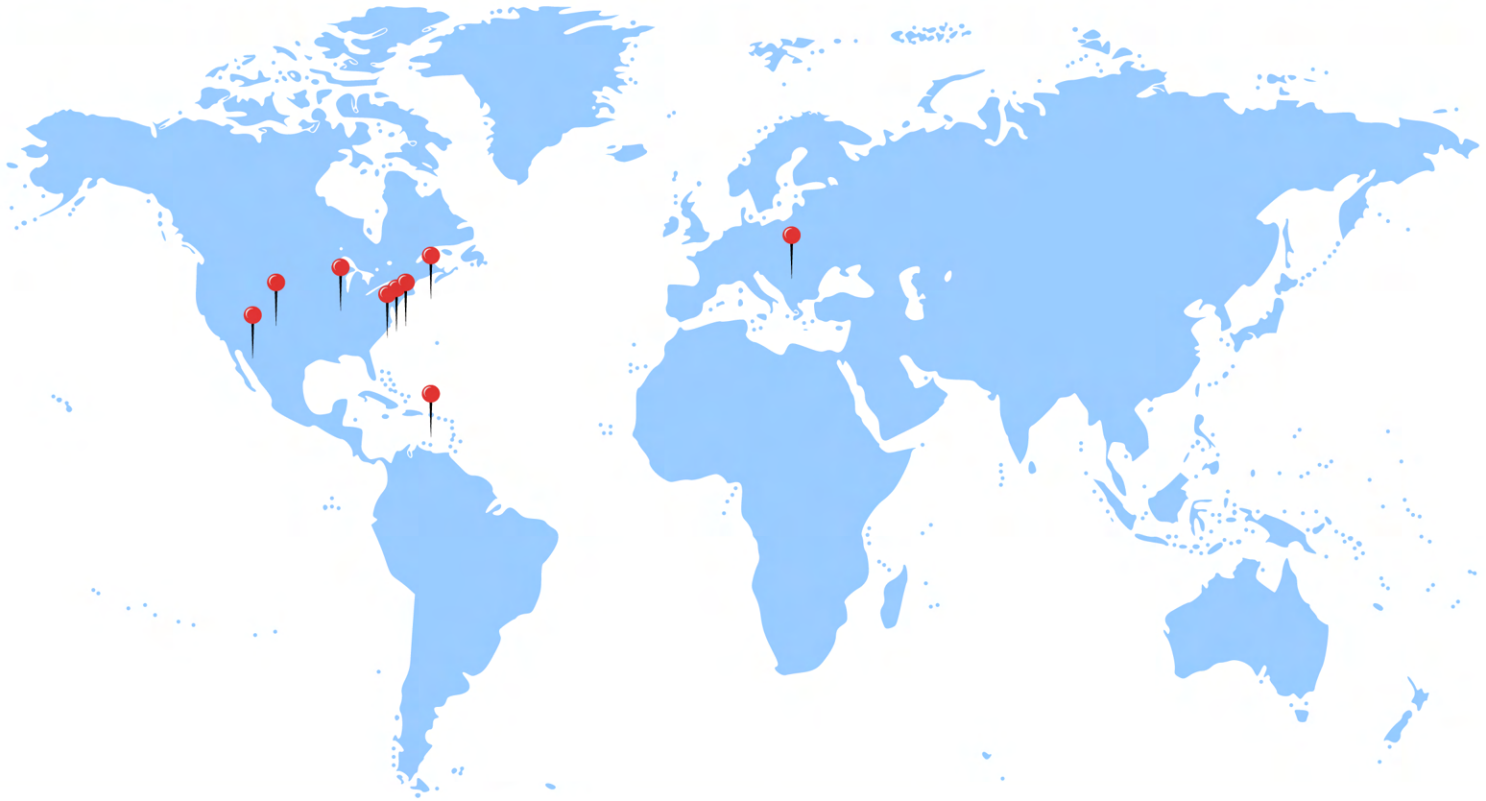
GRADUATE CONFERENCE TRAVEL

This year, P&N awarded 19 Graduate Travel Awards through a more rigorous and focused selection process that prioritized undergraduate student involvement. The results were outstanding. Not only were undergraduates deeply involved in the preparation of research and poster presentations, but nearly all conference presentations included undergraduate co-authors—a clear reflection of our department's commitment to mentorship and collaboration.

These conferences offered invaluable opportunities to engage with cutting-edge research, present findings, build professional networks, and explore new collaborations. Graduate mentors played an essential role in helping undergraduates navigate the conference experience—guiding them in selecting talks to attend, introducing them to researchers, and deepening their understanding of the science presented. The experience not only enriched the undergraduates' academic development but also showcased the strength and cohesion of our research community.

These opportunities would not have been possible without the generous support of the Charles Lafitte Foundation. We are truly grateful for their continued support and investment in our students' growth and success.

WHERE OUR STUDENTS PRESENTED



NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry (AAGP) Convention, Phoenix, AZ

Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT) Convention, Baltimore, MD

Black Graduate Conference in Psychology (BGCP), Richmond, VA

Cognitive Neuroscience Society (CNS), Boston, MA

The Association for Psychological Science Annual Convention (APS), Washington, D.C.

The Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) Annual Conference 2024, Denver, CO

International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), Vienna, Austria

National Latinx Psychological Association (NLPA) Conference, San Juan, Puerto Rico

Society for Research in Child Development's (SRCD), Minneapolis, MN

GRADUATE

HIGHLIGHTS & REFLECTIONS

This section features reflections and highlights from graduate students whose research and conference travel were supported by the Charles Lafitte Foundation. These testimonials showcase the breadth of their projects, the impact of undergraduate mentorship, and the ways in which this support advanced their academic and professional development. Through both research grants and travel awards, graduate students were able to lead meaningful studies, present their findings at national and international conferences, and guide undergraduates in hands-on research experiences.

"I'm investigating how the predictability of rewards influences the effort we exert in pursuing goals. This spring, I developed a toy version of my experiment to mentor undergraduates in the Cognitive Neuroscience Internship Program, where I guided them through experimental design, data analysis, and poster presentation. I'm currently finalizing my study design and plan to launch online data collection this summer. Through this work, I hope to better understand how uncertainty around outcomes impacts motivation and behavior."

Jackie Bao, 2nd-year CNAP graduate student

Motivation Under Uncertainty: How Outcome Predictability Influences Task Effort

"While internet searches are often thought to harm learning, my research project explores whether actively engaging with online information can actually boost understanding. Rather than assuming technology is detrimental to education, this study asks: Can certain types of searching improve how students learn and think?

One undergraduate student in particular, Norah, has been especially involved in this research. Her participation was made possible by the Lafitte Grant, which provided funding for a research assistant position and supported her involvement in a study on how different types of internet searching affect learning and metacognition. The grant also covered data collection on Prolific, allowing Norah to engage in every stage of the research process—literature review, piloting, experiment design in Qualtrics, stimulus creation, and data coding. Her contributions significantly advanced the project, which was later presented at the CCN Colloquium and the 2025 Society for Applied Research in Memory and Cognition conference."

Joyce Park, 3rd-year graduate student, Psychology Ph.D. Program
Re-evaluating the Memorial Consequences of Internet Searching

"The funding I received from the Charles Lafitte Foundation allowed me to attend the 2025 Society for Research in Child Development meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota. There, I presented my poster, 'Social Affiliation and Belief Revision in Childhood: Shared Beliefs Are More Difficult for Children to Revise.' The poster presented some of the first empirical findings that children who identify with a belief-based group are less likely to revise their beliefs, even when presented with disconfirming information. My undergraduate mentees — Joanna Brooke '24, Umang Dhingra '26, Justine Medveckus '26, Lindsay Schwartzman '25, and Olivia Binder '25 — were instrumental at all phases of the project, from participant recruitment to data collection, analysis, and literature review.

Attending this conference provided valuable opportunities to connect with other researchers who study social affiliation and beliefs in children, attend talks by leading experts in the field, and gather feedback that will shape future directions for my research. Inspired by these conversations, I am designing a follow-up project to investigate how openness to dissent might affect children's willingness to revise shared group beliefs. My mentee Justine Medveckus will pursue this question in her independent study in the coming semester."

Zoe Finiasz, 4th-year graduate student, Psychology Ph.D. Program
Social Affiliation and Belief Revision in Childhood: Shared Beliefs are More Difficult for Children to Revise

"This project investigates how beliefs about goal commitment—such as whether it can grow, persist, or recover after setbacks—influence self-regulation during goal pursuit. With Lafitte funding, we ran two studies using a new measure of goal commitment beliefs. Early results show that different belief dimensions predict unique outcomes like goal disengagement, grit, and resilience. A third study is in development to complete the research package, with potential applications for designing interventions that promote adaptive commitment beliefs.

Thanks to Lafitte support, undergraduates Kai Tang and Elizabeth Buduen have played key roles across all stages of the project, from brainstorming to data collection and troubleshooting. This summer, Ella Lodewyk is leading data analysis and study design through Duke's Vertical Integration Program. Their contributions have been essential, and the experience is helping them grow as independent researchers."

Skyler Wyly, 2nd-year graduate student, Psychology Ph.D. Program
Goal Commitment Beliefs: Distinct Predictors of Self-regulation in Goal Pursuit

"Thanks to the Charles Lafitte Foundation Travel Award, I attended the 2025 Cognitive Neuroscience Society Annual Meeting to present research on how forgiveness shapes emotional and physiological responses to memories of past wrongs. Alongside undergraduate collaborators Caroline Howard and Annika Socia, I showcased findings from our U.S.–Colombia study, which suggest that forgiveness can lessen negative emotions without altering memory accuracy—possibly serving as a self-regulation tool.

The experience allowed my undergraduate mentees to expand their skills in psychophysiological data analysis and science communication. It also provided valuable networking opportunities, including connections with professors at UBC and the University of Toronto that may lead to future postdoctoral opportunities. I'm deeply grateful to the Lafitte Foundation for supporting both my professional development and meaningful undergraduate mentorship."

Gabriela Fernández-Miranda, 4th-year graduate student, Cognitive Neuroscience Ph.D. Program
Emotional responses to remembered wrongs: The association of forgiveness with physiological markers of emotions of memories of past wrongdoings

"With generous funding from the Charles Lafitte Foundation, I, alongside a team of 3 undergraduates and 2 graduate students, attended the 2025 Association for Psychological Science (APS) Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. All six of us were members of the Bass Connections team 'Creating a Contemplative Community' and co-authored and presented two poster presentations: 'Trait Cognitive Reappraisal Moderates the Relationship Between Negative Mind-Wandering and Default Mode Network-Related EEG Microstate Dynamics' and 'Not All Who Wander Are Lost: Meditation Beginners, Trait Nonreactivity, and Positive Mind-Wandering.'

This opportunity allowed 3 undergraduates to attend their first major academic conference, supported by graduate student mentors. At APS, they gained confidence in their public speaking, networked with scholars, and experienced first-hand what it means to be part of a research community. For me, the conference was deeply affirming — not only in mentoring future scholars but also in exchanging ideas with leading researchers and experiencing the collaborative nature of psychology. I'd like to thank the Charles Lafitte Foundation, once again, for making opportunities like this possible."

Kiana Sabugo, 2nd-year graduate student, Cognitive Neuroscience Ph.D. Program

"Thanks to the Charles Lafitte Foundation, I was able to attend the CNS conference, where I presented a poster on aging, memory, and decision-making. The experience provided valuable feedback that has helped shape my dissertation, and offered opportunities to connect with faculty, postdocs, and fellow researchers—including scholars from Korea whose work I've long admired.

The award also allowed me to bring one undergraduate student, a post-baccalaureate research assistant, and our lab manager, all of whom had contributed meaningfully to the project. Attending CNS gave them firsthand exposure to the field of cognitive neuroscience and helped clarify their own professional goals. I'm grateful for this opportunity to grow as a scholar and to share the experience with my team."

Christina Yu, 4th-year graduate student, Cognitive Neuroscience Ph.D. Program
Multi-Attribute Memory and Decision-Making Across the Lifespan: Neural Representations and Behavioral Dynamics

"The Charles Lafitte Travel Grant made it possible for our research team — 3 undergraduates and 3 graduates — to attend the 2025 Association for Psychological Science (APS) Annual Convention in Washington, D.C. As a graduate student and one of the Team Leaders for the Bass Connections project 'Creating a Contemplative Community,' I organized our participation and mentored the undergraduates as they prepared to present two posters: (1) 'Trait Cognitive Reappraisal Moderates the Relationship Between Negative Mind-Wandering and Default Mode Network-Related EEG Microstate Dynamics' and (2) 'Not All Who Wander Are Lost: Meditation Beginners, Trait Nonreactivity, and Positive Mind-Wandering.'

This was the first conference for all of our undergraduates — many of whom plan to pursue graduate school in psychology or medical school — and I supported them in developing their poster presentations, choosing sessions to attend, asking questions, and networking with professors and future mentors. It was rewarding to watch them grow in confidence, communicate their research, and connect with the broader psychological science community.

Thanks to the generosity of the Charles Lafitte Foundation, we fostered a collaborative and developmental experience that benefited everyone involved. Our undergraduates came away excited to pursue future conferences, and I grew as a mentor and team leader. I am grateful for the opportunity to share our research and represent Duke University on a national stage."

Armen Bagdasarov, 5th-year graduate student, Clinical Psychology Ph.D. Program