

STUDENT AWARDS NEWSLETTER

Fall Award: *Outstanding Research Scholar*

Winner: *Nina Ventresco*



Dr. Shaun Wiley, Nina Ventresco, and Dr. Margaret Martinetti at the awards ceremony

The recipient of the 2014 Outstanding Research Scholar Award is Nina Ventresco. Nina's scholarly record is truly outstanding. In addition to her major in Psychology, Nina is completing a French minor and also is a member of the College Honors Program, for which she has won an award for her research experience. Nina has extensive research experience, and has worked with three psychology faculty members at TCNJ. She completed two semesters in the Social Change and Collective Identity Lab with Dr. Wiley and conducted a MUSE project with Dr. Wiley in the summer of 2014. Nina is completing her Senior Honors Thesis in Psychology with Dr. Wiley this semester. In addition, she is currently a member of the Testing and Assessment in Psychology (TAP) Lab with Dr. Jean Kirnan and she has worked with Dr. Jarret Crawford on a study that evolved after she was his student in the 299 Research Seminar course. Nina has made contributions to every stage of multiple research projects in her time at TCNJ. As a member of Dr. Wiley's Social Change and Collective Identity Lab, Nina has designed, executed, analyzed and written manuscripts for projects on feminist identity and anti-immigrant prejudice, both of which are in preparation for journal publication. As part of her Senior Honors Thesis, Nina has developed a mixed-method project to examine the impact of parental engagement on low-income, single parents' psychological well-being at the Christina Seix Academy in Trenton. The project is hers from start to finish. As part of the TAP Lab, Nina's work ethic and skill set were instrumental in ensuring timely revisions (over the summer) to assessment surveys that are administered in the first week of classes and needed early IRB and departmental approvals. Nina's expertise in Qualtrics on-line survey software allowed her to make revisions, develop item blocks to randomize presentation, and create a survey embedded scoring key with multiple scales. She was solely responsible for the logistics in first-week administration of one of our surveys. Nina performed similar tasks with the on-line administration of an entering freshmen survey, the PASS, administered on-line during Welcome Week. She helped write up the results of a study that she helped to conceive, conduct, design, and analyze as part of her 299 course with Dr. Crawford. That study was published with Dr. Crawford and Dr. Wiley with Nina as a third author last year in the journal of *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*. Finally, Nina demonstrates exceptional promise for continued research in psychology after she graduates from TCNJ this May. Next year, Nina will be attending Lehigh University to pursue a PhD in School Psychology. She plans to continue her research on the comprehensive effects of parental engagement on children's academic and social development. Nina clearly exemplifies an outstanding research scholar in psychology. On behalf of the entire psychology department, we congratulate you, Nina.

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Spring Award: *The Marshall P. Smith Scholarship*

Winner: *Mitchell Farrell*



Dr. Nancy Breland with Mitchell Farrell

Mitchell Farrell does outstanding academic work, demonstrates exceptional commitment to psychology, and has participated in several psychology-related activities beyond the classroom. In addition to his consistently excellent record in classroom-based psychology courses, Mitch has demonstrated extensive research involvement in the TCNJ Alcohol Lab, which studies animal models of alcohol abuse. Mitch was only a sophomore in the lab when he was asked to take the lead on the experimental protocols. He quickly learned MED-PC programming and managed the details of daily data collection. Mitch is now completing his fourth semester in the Alcohol Lab and has begun his Psychology Senior Honors Thesis as a junior. His thesis project is combining two lines of research to investigate the Effects of Environmental Enrichment on Behavioral Economic Demand for Alcohol and Sucrose in Long-Evans Rats. Mitch plans to present his thesis results at the Society for Neuroscience meeting in Chicago this fall. Mitch also has sought out and realized additional research experience at other institutions. Last summer, he completed a Summer Undergraduate Research Program at Hunter College, investigating the neuroprotective effects of leptin after methamphetamine administration in mice. Mitch presented his results from this project at the Leadership Alliance National Symposium in Stamford, Connecticut. This summer, Mitch will complete a second Undergraduate Research Program at the Center for the Integrative Study of Animal Behavior at Indiana University, Bloomington. In addition to his research experiences, Mitch has gained early teaching experience serving as an Instructional Intern for the Behavioral Pharmacology of Drugs of Abuse course. In this role, he serves as an undergraduate teaching assistant, delivering portions of lectures, assisting students during weekly office hours, and reviewing drafts of students' papers. Finally, Mitch is a member of the Golden Key International Honour Society, the TCNJ Honors Program, and Psi Chi. In addition, he will be inducted into the TCNJ Chapter of Phi Beta Kappa this spring.

In his beautifully written narrative, Mitch described how his personal experiences with neuroscience and his many research and teaching activities have led him to the decision to pursue an academic career. This fall, Mitch will apply to Ph.D. programs in behavioral neuroscience and plans to teach and conduct research on addiction. We congratulate you, Mitch, and wish you all the best.

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Spring Award: *The Laurie Ann Mandara '07 Scholarship*

Winner: *Talia Everett*



Talia Everett with the Mandara family.

Laurie Ann Mandara was a Psychology major who passed away from cancer in September 2006, and she was awarded her BA degree with honors, posthumously in May 2007. Laurie persevered with her education throughout her illness and treatment, and demonstrated extraordinary courage and persistence in the face of obstacles. Everyone who met her was impressed with her dedication to her studies, her optimism, her resilience, and her generous spirit. Laurie was a very loving, generous, selfless person, very close to her family and friends, with a strong religious faith. She loved getting an education and had an enthusiastic passion for life.

The Laurie Ann Mandara '07 Scholarship is given each year to a psychology major who demonstrates both academic excellence and commitment to community service and/or overcoming personal obstacles.

Talia Everett has a strong academic record and has demonstrated significant determination and courage, despite a tragic personal obstacle. Talia is now a sophomore at TCNJ and has maintained her grade point average despite demanding personal responsibilities. She has demonstrated commitment to psychology through her coursework in the counseling and clinical specialization.

Talia's perseverance and optimism truly embody Laurie's courage throughout her illness and her determination to never give up.

We congratulate you, Talia, and wish you all the best.