

Meet Our First Year Students!

Name: Aisha Al-Amin

Hometown: Flossmoor, IL

Alma Mater: University of San Diego

Attraction to SDSU: I fell in love with San Diego in my undergrad years at USD, and I was ecstatic when I found out SDSU had a great I-O program. I love the emphasis on student-faculty mentorship because it really shows that my mentor cares about me and my personal and professional development. Also with the program requiring both a thesis and internship, I believe I will gain a strong background of research and practice that will allow me to optimize my skills in the workforce.

In my free time, I... love to watch movies and tv shows, journal, spend time with my friends, and try new things!

An interesting fact about me: I got to see Hamilton twice! My first time was in Chicago, and the other time was when I studied abroad in London (how ironic lol)!

Favorite San Diego food: I have MANY favorite cuisines, but if you want a good smash burger, go to The Friendly Tavern located in North Park. I order the "OG Dirty Flat Top" with ranch, a side of fries, and a ginger ale!

In ten years, I see myself... somewhere on a beach surrounded by the people I love and financially thriving. I'm fulfilled and working for an organization I love that aligns with my personal values and pays very well (even better if it's my own company)!

What's your go to karaoke song? Scream and Shout by Will.i.am and Britney Spears or Promiscuous by Nelly Furtado



Inside this issue:

First Year Interviews	1-2
Fall SDOSP Meeting	3
APSA Speakers	4-5
Internship Experiences	6-7
Announcements; Faculty Publications and Presentations	8
Fall Highlights (Photos)	9-12



Name: Nathan Harris

Hometown: Overland Park, KS

Alma Mater: Arizona State University

Attraction to SDSU: My undergraduate research mentor, Dr. Julia Hammett, who graduated from the MA program here, told me about the I-O program and gave it a very high recommendation.

In my free time, I... enjoy reading, gaming, watching anime, and taking long walks on the beach.

An interesting fact about me: My favorite book is Anna Karenina by Leo Tolstoy.

Favorite San Diego food: So far, a Crack Shack chicken sandwich.

In ten years, I see myself... supporting healthy and enriching work practices in the gaming and esports industry.

What's your go to karaoke song? With or Without You - U2

Additional Information:

THE STUDENT EDITOR OF THIS ISSUE WAS SHREYA CHO

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SHREYA CHO, ANIKA JOHNSON, AND MAKAYLA OJEAH

If you would like additional information on the Applied Psychology Student Association (APSA) or anything discussed in this newsletter, please email jeff.conte@sdsu.edu or lisa.kath@sdsu.edu

Don't forget to join the APSA LinkedIn Group.
For more information, contact Dr. Lisa Kath
(lisa.kath@sdsu.edu)

Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Meet Our First Year Students! (continued from Page 1)



Name: Anika Johnson
Hometown: Minneapolis, MN
Alma Mater: Colorado State University
Attraction to SDSU: The program culture! Having a close, supportive community was super important to me.
In my free time, I... love to go to yoga, swim, crochet, and make fun coffees.
An interesting fact about me: I'm left handed!
Favorite San Diego food: Baja Beach Cafe in PB!
In ten years, I see myself... Chilling with my (future) dog in my big backyard. Oh and also working for a company I love!!!
What's your go to karaoke song? All Too Well - Taylor Swift

Name: Ethan Masiclat
Hometown: San Diego, CA
Alma Mater: University of California, Irvine
Attraction to SDSU: There's so many things that I could put here, but I'll try to stick to the things that sold me. I think that the mentor match model that they use makes the whole grad school process so much easier and approachable. Additionally, I find Jeff Conte's (my mentor) work in personality and cognitive ability to be incredibly fascinating. I believe that the efforts that the faculty make to ensure that students are cared for and are a good fit are why I decided to join this program. After being here for a few weeks, I can confirm that all of the professors in the program are great people and that I made the right choice! On a side note, some other perks are the city of San Diego itself. Greatest city in the world (no bias).
In my free time, I... play pickleball, video games, guitar, watch TV/Movies, and collect board games. There's too many to list, but those are my main ones.
An interesting fact about me: I was in a band called 2aoi as an undergrad at UCI. I played a couple house shows as the guitarist and vocalist.
Favorite San Diego food: Tacos El Gordo. You have to go there!
In ten years, I see myself... working as an internal consultant or as an HR analyst at a major company. I aim to make the work lives of the employees there just a little bit more bearable with what I learn in the program.
What's your go to karaoke song? Mr. Brightside by The Killers



Name: MaKayla Ojeah
Hometown: Houston, TX
Alma Mater: Spelman College
Attraction to SDSU: What drew me to the program was its mentor-match structure and selectivity. I've always had a strong desire to live in California, but that honestly wasn't on my mind when I was applying. I'm very interested in the applied side of I-O psychology, but I wasn't ready to give up my passion for research, so this program felt like the perfect fit. While completing my internship at Emory University in 2024, I met Ami Ikeda, an alum of SDSU's MA in Psychology program, who told me about the MS program. Once I was accepted and visited, I fell in love with the city, campus, program curriculum, and faculty support.
In my free time, I... love reading romance books, watching 2000s teen dramas (like The O.C., 90210, The Secret Life of the American Teenager), and making content on social media!
An interesting fact about me: I was in a movie called Muna (2019)! It was filmed in Los Angeles, and that was my first time visiting California.
Favorite San Diego food: Right now, my favorites are Mike's Red Tacos and Everbowl (I love açai bowls)!
In ten years, I see myself... very happy and comfortable working as a consultant for a big company or even owning my own consulting firm. In my free time, I will travel with my Spelman sisters, have a beautiful family, and serve as a mentor (hopefully to my Spelman sisters, fellow HBCU students, and students in the MS program at SDSU)!
What's your go to karaoke song? Irreplaceable by Beyoncé

Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Fall SDOSP Meeting

By Shreya Cho



Thursday, October 23rd, 2025 marked the third meeting for the San Diego Organizational Science & Practice (SDOSP) grassroots group, where we welcomed guest speaker Sarai McMahan, who is an SDSU alum. Sarai currently works as an external consultant for her own company, Knowledge Training Solutions, but her journey getting there was not linear. Here is a snapshot of Sarai's career journey that ultimately brought her to the world of Learning & Development:

After graduating from SDSU with a B.S. in Communications, Sarai pivoted to optometry and took a job at Lens Crafters, where, among other things, she created curriculum for the company and moved to the role of General Manager, honing in on her passion for Learning & Development. Her next role was in optometry at Kaiser Permanente, after which she moved into an instructional designer role for UPS Global, an experience she cites as being the foundation for what she looks for in company culture. Specifically, Sarai mentioned that her mentor created an environment where she felt safe to make mistakes and learn. Sarai also worked in Learning & Development at Rady's Children's Hospital and ServiceNow before founding her own external consulting company. Through her diverse experiences, she worked with SDSU alumni at each company and learned about how to navigate the differences in Learning & Development in corporate versus nonprofit organizations (e.g., budget restrictions, different levels of autonomy).

Sarai also shared some advice and insight for the graduate students in attendance as we look forward to our future roles in the workforce. Some key takeaways include: don't be afraid to explore different roles and industries, network and look for mentors at every opportunity to help advance our careers, be confident in the level of knowledge that we gain from the program, and of course, your path does not have to be linear! We thank Sarai for sharing her inspiring career journey and valuable insights with us!

Stay connected on LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com/groups/13593982/

and subscribe to the SDOSP listserv

(SDOSP@groups.io) if you haven't yet!

Pictured right: SDSU alum Simran Bhatia accepting her Certificate of Recognition for her dedication and support of SDOSP.



Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Fall APSA Speakers

Sean Foley

By MaKayla Ojeah

This semester, we had the pleasure of talking to Sean Foley, the Director of Organizational Development for Infineon Technology. Sean is an expert in onboarding and has developed many successful onboarding programs. His thesis was one of the 10 most downloaded theses from the SDSU library from 2014 to 2016. What's most rewarding to Sean is to design programs, specifically developing programs related to talent. Sean shared with us valuable advice from his experience in the industry:

What key aspects do you prioritize when designing effective onboarding programs?

Sean explained that when designing onboarding programs, because of the challenge of effectively measuring outcomes in the organization, he focuses on user experience, improving what already exists, and best practices. He explained that onboarding is a time in which one should seek information, essentially a learning experience. Sean also referenced the "4 C's" as important aspects: compliance, clarity, culture, and connection. Specifically, Sean emphasized culture (how you understand how things get done in the organization) and connection (how are people connected to navigate within the culture). In addition, Sean looks at initial reactions, feedback, surveys, and user-experience to gauge the impact of the onboarding programs.

How would you define a good leader and high-potential leader?

Sean described a good leader as someone who is dependent on what is important to the organization or what the organization is looking for in a leader. He mentioned that he admires servant leadership, leaders he can learn from and trust to have his back, and a leader that can communicate the vision clearly to the people. In addition, he stated that determining what your metric is will better inform you on what a good leader looks like in the context of a particular organization. A high-potential leader's capabilities, level of ambition, and engagement are reflective of how they do their job. A leader's engagement can reveal how likely they are to stick around, while their level of ambition can show how much they want to grow.

What are some differences between internal and external consulting?

Sean described that when working as an external consultant, the role requires more expertise and rigor, as you need to be able to make most of the decisions. He said that external consulting is more structured and rigorous than internal consulting. However, the downside is that you are on the outside and have to make plans that they might not even implement once you leave, resulting in your not having the opportunity to see things through to the end.

What was something from the program, an article or a lesson, that was helpful?

Sean reflected on his insightful talk with Ben Schneider as they discussed how what gets measured, reported, and rewarded becomes your culture. In addition, he stated that the Culture Survival Guide by Edgar Schein was something that stood out to him during his time in a program. He also said that he uses the phrase "performance is a multifactor variable" often to get people to think about things more holistically. In terms of closing the gap between the program and industry or I-O and executives, Sean stated that it is important to meet somewhere in the middle when it comes to communication, by opening up discussion and offering different perspectives from an angle of talking about the topic rather than deciding who is right or wrong.

What is some advice you have for us as we look for internships and full-time job opportunities during this challenging job market?

Sean emphasized the importance of getting a referral (i.e., through networking) as most organizations have an internal referral portal, which will guarantee that they look at an application. He also suggested that our resumes should include numbers and results to show quantitative information as organizations want people who achieve things and not just manage things.

Thank you Sean for taking the time to have this conversation with us! We truly appreciate you taking the time to share your valuable knowledge and experiences with us.



Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Fall APSA Speakers

Catherine (Cat) Huyen

By Anika Johnson

This semester we had the wonderful opportunity to speak with Catherine (Cat) Huyen, a People Analytics & Talent Development Specialist at CVS Health. Cat blends her expertise in I-O psychology and talent development to make sense of complex people data and uncover insights that help employees thrive. Her mission is to make people's data more approachable, practical, and maybe even a little fun! When she's not wrangling data, you'll likely find her chasing outdoor adventures. Cat shared lots of valuable insights with us, including how she engages with data, communicating findings, and advice for students trying to break into the people analytics space:



What types of data do you typically work with, and what software or analytics tools do you use most frequently? How is the data you work with typically collected/sourced?

Cat executes projects that focus on a wide variety of topics, including turnover, engagement, mobility, program evaluations, and strategic workforce planning. She obtains data from several sources, including from HR, compensation, external data, customer metrics and of course, employee surveys! Using Excel, Tableau, R, and SQL, Cat executes some killer data analysis. She mostly uses regression, correlations, t-tests, and ANOVAs, but she has seen other types of analyses like multilevel modeling pop up in corporate settings too.

What tips do you have for communicating insights to stakeholders?

Cat notes some key assumptions to make when translating findings, including: 1) no one you're presenting to has a technical background (start with the basics, and keep it simple), 2) people process information differently than you (reframe the results to be most impactful), and 3) everyone is busy (so lean into the "so what?" of your findings). She also finds it helpful to avoid jargon, use simple visualizations, and ask herself "If I was the leader of XYZ, what are some things that I would care about?" Pro-tip: come prepared with a more detailed version of your slide deck in case your audience wants more information!

What advice do you have for students interested in getting into the analytics space?

Engage in networking (local I-O events, conferences) and keep in touch with your connections. Furthermore, finding a manager that can act as a mentor can be an especially valuable opportunity to learn technical and soft skills. Cat also encouraged us to be comfortable with the uncomfortable by adopting a growth mindset, embracing change, being open to opportunities, and reframing "failure" as a growth opportunity. On the hard skills side, to break into the analytics space, she recommends getting familiar with Excel, focusing on data translation and communication skills in your resume, and highlighting your technical skills in interviews.

Do you have any tips for students looking for a job?

Look at your LinkedIn feed rather than LinkedIn jobs to see posts from hiring managers directly, use websites such as Hiring Cafe, always negotiate, and most importantly, be human!

Thank you so much to Cat for taking the time to speak with us! We greatly appreciate her taking time out of her day to share her experience and expertise with us.

Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Second Year Internship Experiences

Internships provide our students an opportunity to practice their skills and apply their knowledge within an organization. This year, we had 4 students complete engaging internships. Oftentimes, these internships build a foundation for our students' careers, building upon knowledge gained throughout the M.S. program, and supporting our success in future career opportunities.

Tina Madani: I was an HR intern at DUAL North America. Following acquisitions of seven brands, DUAL NA launched a rebranding initiative and needed updated job descriptions that met industry-best standards. I conducted a job analysis for the claims job family to create rebranded, standardized job descriptions that clearly outlined the essential functions of each role and the qualifications required at entry. Additionally, I conducted salary benchmarking for all job titles at DUAL NA, comparing them to external market data. This served as a guide for the Talent Acquisition team to understand how current salaries aligned with competitors while formal salary bands were being developed.



Sarah Snyder: I was a People & Culture (P&C) Intern at AeroShield Materials, a startup that makes super-insulating glass. I worked on a variety of projects, and had many hands-on experiences as my manager is the only other person on the P&C team. Luckily, AeroShield hired me on a part-time basis for this year. I am currently creating an Individual Development Plan system, guide, and training presentation that I started during my internship. During the summer, I designed onboarding/offboarding SOPs and flowcharts, as well as onboarding experience and exit interview questions. I was also the point person for two offboardings while my manager was on vacation!

If you are able to, try to prioritize applying to organizations that seem to know about, or are at least interested in I-O, so you will get the most out of your experience. Similarly, try to apply to organizations that align with your values because it will keep you motivated if the work is tedious. Know when your manager is asking you to do a project their way simply to complete it, and know when they have a more abstract vision for the project where you can incorporate I-O principles and your ideas.



Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Second Year Internship Experiences



Catherine Missler: This past summer, I joined LPL Financial as a Leadership & Development Intern on the Talent Management team. The experience was incredibly rewarding, allowing me to grow both professionally and personally while learning from inspiring colleagues! Some of my projects included designing interview guides for people leaders and executives, conducting research on employee development planning best practices, and leading a retrospective on the mid-year performance management cycle. Overall, my internship experience allowed me to apply what I had learned in the classroom while further strengthening skills I can carry forward into my career!

Alex Nash: I worked as an employee engagement intern with Blue Shield CA this summer. I helped my team prep for the action planning stage after the annual survey was completed. I helped create content for people leaders to sustain action planning throughout the whole year in addition to after the annual survey. Also, I collaborated with two people + engagement teams to update the action planning resources on our platform and our internal intranet. Through my experience, I have learned that I am passionate about the employee experience, committed to working with an organization whose values I align with, and reassured of my place in the workplace.

Fall 2025 APSA Newsletter

Thesis Defenses

Amanda Kellaris - July 7th, 2025

The influence of personality traits on job satisfaction and turnover intent in remote work environments

Chair: Jeff Conte

Daniela Ortega - August 4th, 2025

When do work hours creep into sleep time? Exploring differences in nonwork activities and gender

Chair: Lacie Barber

Announcements

- **Daniela Ortega** started a new role as an Education Center Specialist at Southwestern College.
- **Edie Goldberg** has a book coming out on March 27th, 2026: *Performance Enablement: A New Model for Driving Organizational Performance*. Available for pre-order now!
<https://tinyurl.com/ms92ybvw>
- **Rianna Roush** started a new role as a Training and Process Development Coordinator at Singleton Schreiber.
- **Zack Girgis** recently left Adobe and rejoined LinkedIn as a Senior Director, HR Business Partner for LinkedIn's CTO and the Infrastructure Engineering organization.

Faculty Publications and Presentations

- **Barber, L. K.** cited in (2025, October). *The Future of Work Is Flexible*. Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.
- Baranik, L. (Co-Chair) & **Kath, L.M.** (Co-Chair) (2025). *What you need to know now: Hostility, Mental Health, and Vulnerable Populations* [Symposium]. Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Annual Conference, Denver, CO.
- Dinh, J., Reyes, D., **Rodriguez, W. A.**, Shah, S., Hsu, L., & Duplessis, L. (2025). Sustaining good Samaritans: Evaluating volunteerism after crisis. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 1-17.
- Magahis, V. & **Kath, L.M.** (2025, March). *Healthcare workers' experiences of aggression*. Oral Presentation at the San Diego State University Student Symposium.
- Miskovsky, M., Barnes-Farrell, J., & **Kath, L.M.** (2025). *Nurse leadership and work-family conflict: Exploring the moderating effects of resilience and social support on stress-related outcomes*. Paper presented at the Work, Stress, and Health conference, Seattle, WA.
- **Rodriguez, W. A.**, Nguyen, K., & Zhou, Z. E. (in press). Effect of illegitimate tasks on couples' unhealthy eating: A spillover-crossover model. *Occupational Health Science*.
- **Rodriguez, W. A.** & Zhou, Z. E. (2025). What is an I-O journal and an overview of the editorial process. In N. A. Bowling, M. K. Shoss, & Z. E. Zhou (Eds.), *How to conduct high-quality research in industrial-organizational psychology*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
<https://doi.org/10.4337/9781035307746.00009>
- Stoa, R. (Chair), Agars, M. (Panelist), **Kath, L.M.** (Panelist), McEachern, P. (Panelist), Sitzmann, T. (Panelist) (2025). *Human being vs human doing: IO psychology and internalized capitalism* [Panel]. Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology Annual Conference, Denver, CO.

FALL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Second-Years' Thesis Proposals

All the second-years successfully proposed their theses in the Fall Semester!



FALL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Firsts & Lasts



Top: First- and second-years' first time meeting before the first week of school!

Middle: First day of classes for second- (left) and first-years (right)

Bottom: Last days of PSY 630 (left) and PSY 621 (right)

FALL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

APSA Fall BBQ, Hosted by Lisa Kath



Pictured Above: Students loading their plates from the taco station (top left); Ethan and Tina preparing a game of Jeopardy for the cohort (bottom left).

Pictured Below: The cohort playing a game of Cards Against Humanity (bottom left).



FALL 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

Students in the Wild



First-years after class (left); Second-years and alumni catching up over dinner (right).

We took many 0.5x pictures:



Housewarming (left); Post-seminar dinner (middle); Second-year outing to Menya Ultra (right).

And celebrated the release of Wicked: For Good:



Enjoying Wicked-themed drinks at Chili's (left/right); The first-years on Halloween (middle).